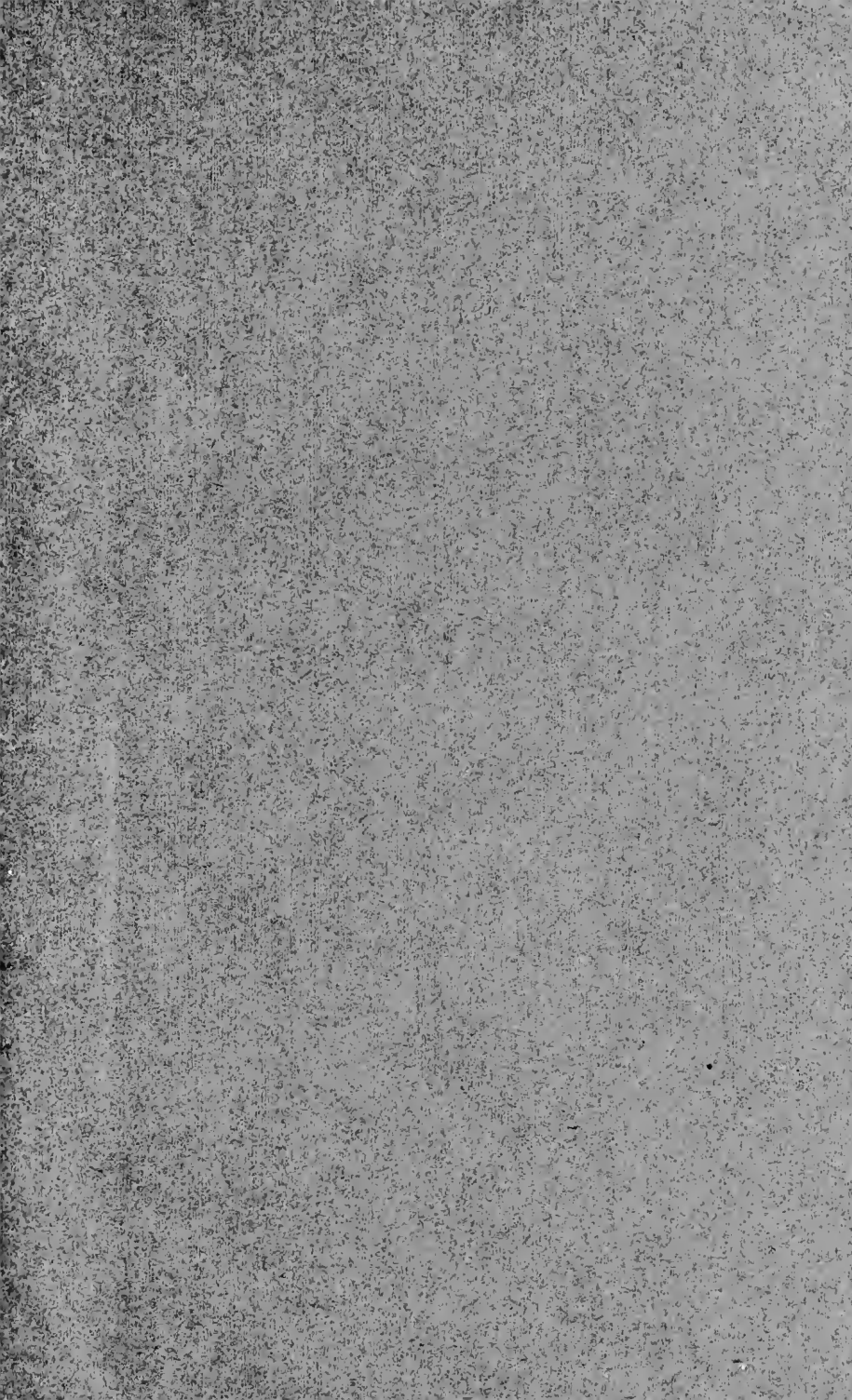
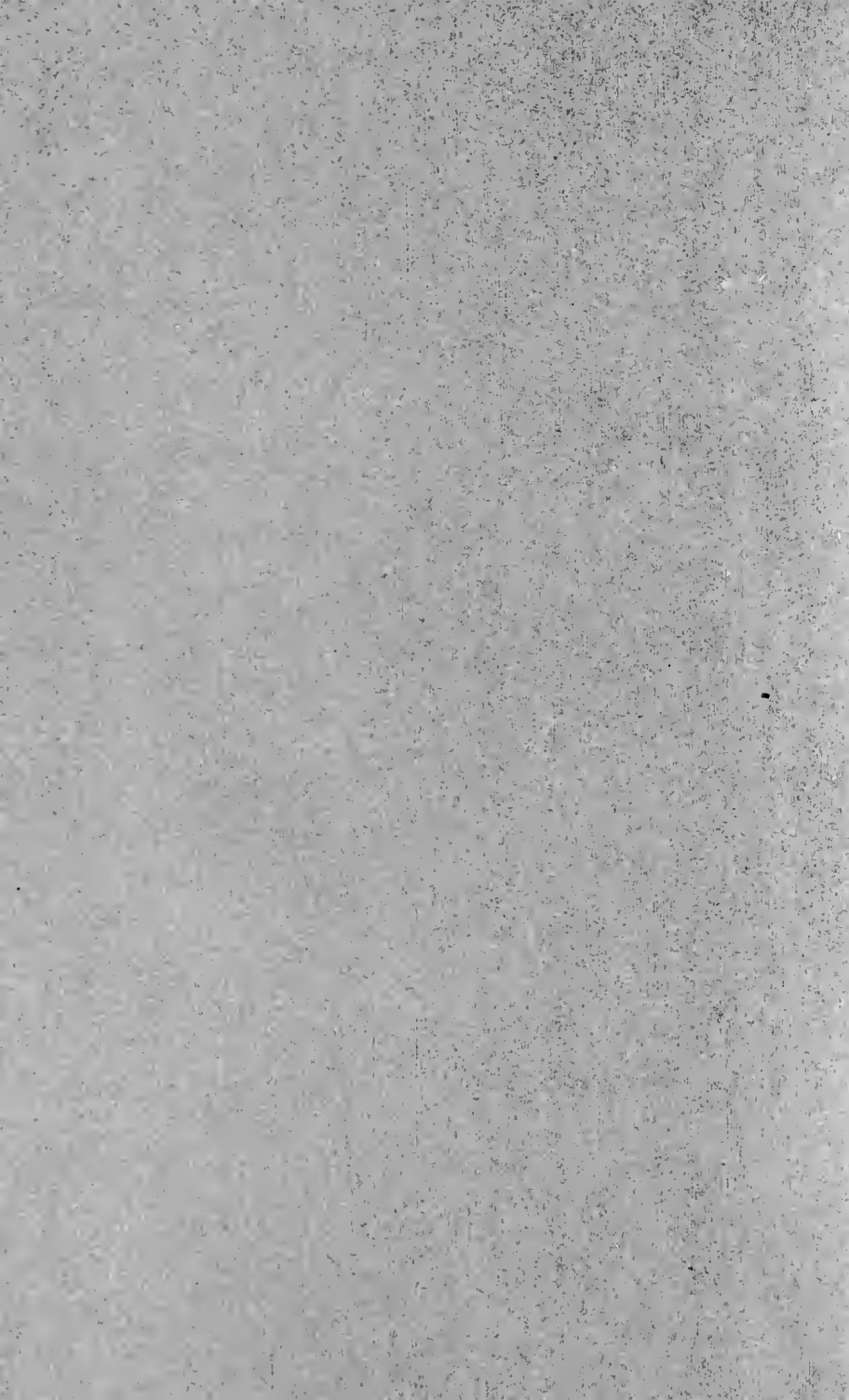


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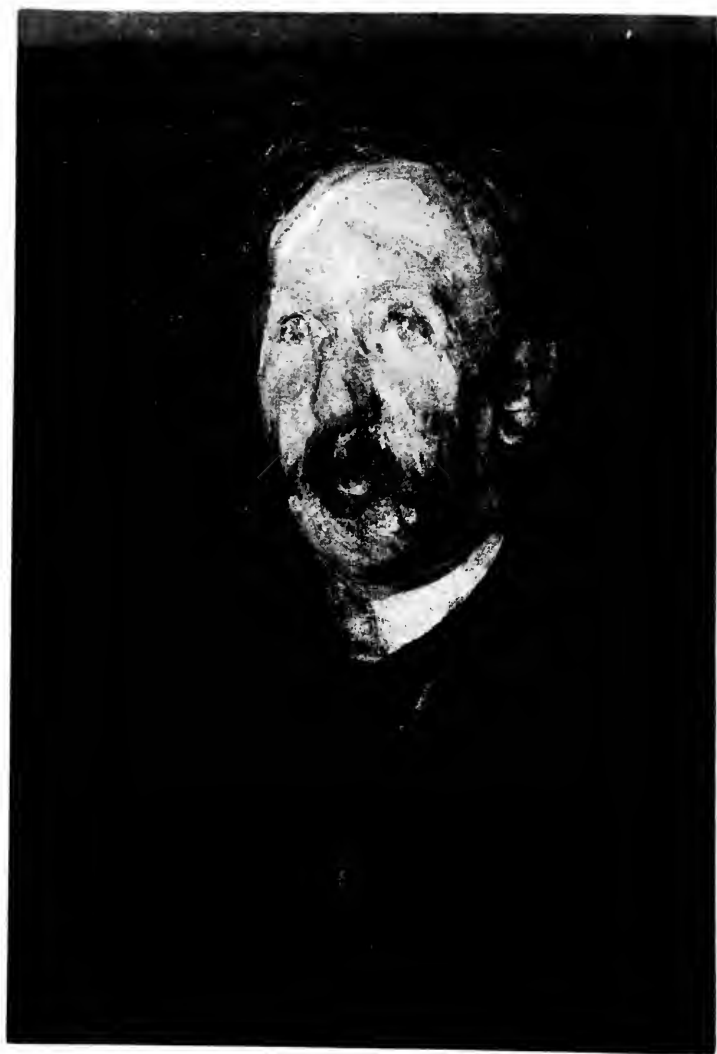
IN
SINGLE STRICTNESS

Volume XVIII

THE CARRA EDITION

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF

GEORGE MOORE



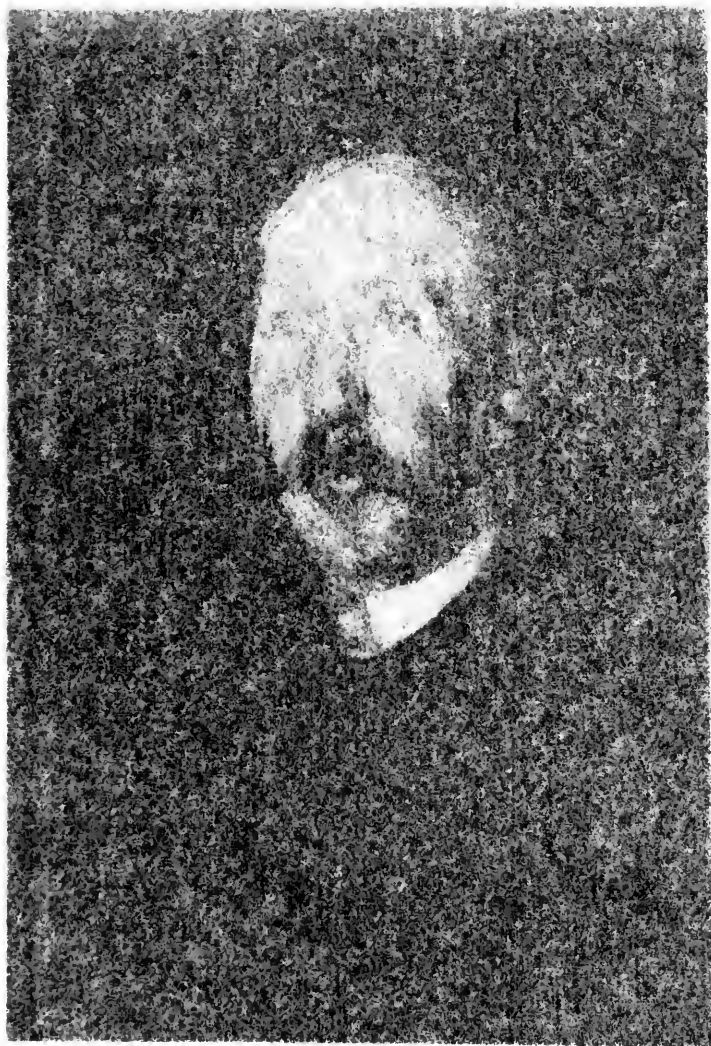
IN SINGLE STRICTNESS

BY
GEORGE MOORE

Carra Edition

PRINTED, FOR SUBSCRIBERS ONLY BY
BONI AND LIVERIGHT, INC., NEW YORK

From a Printing by Walter Sicker
In the National Gall Dublin 1913



GEORGE MOORE

*From a Painting by Walter Sickert
In the National Gallery — Dublin*

IN SINGLE STRICTNESS

BY
GEORGE MOORE

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1923

IN
SINGLE STRICTNESS
(Carra Edition)

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THIRTY-ONE VOLUMES

*This edition consists of 1000 numbered sets
of twenty-one volumes each. The first vol-
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FOR the unfolding of my subject more than one story was needed; but the temperaments of the people in the stories are so closely related that I look upon this book as a single narrative divided into five chapters; and the book's unity having been pointed out, it only remains for me to tell that the stories are all new with the exception of ten or a dozen pages borrowed from *Celibates*, a book written before I had reached my natural limits of literary expression, and that I found myself in the beginning of 1920 obliged to abandon any faintest hope I may have had of rewriting *Celibates* for the task of filling the gap with a new work entitled *In Single Strictness*. A gap in what rank? the reader asks, and I answer: In the books selected by me for the library edition which Mr. Horace Liveright is preparing, the first five narratives to be published this year. Mr. Liveright began by asking for twenty-five books, but I withstood him, saying that no author had more than twenty in him; and that gratitude to my American readers for their approval of my work when the English librarians stood aloof forbade the inclusion of books unworthy of their notice. But is there no other unworthy book among those I have agreed to publish? I asked myself. At the moment I was busy correcting the proofs of *In Single Strictness* and it was not till I had finished with them that I opened *Impressions and Opinions*, a book that I thought would pass, as the French say, like a letter in the post; but

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I turned against it as I had against *Celibates*, and fell to thinking like Marius among the ruins of Carthage. At last a book of talks began to shape itself in my mind. Another big job of work, I said, six or eight months at least, for little can be saved from *Impressions and Opinions*; and forthright I began to consider *A Parley* as a possible title for the new book, else *Parleys, Soliloquies and Meditations*, without however, being able to come to a decision. Time will sift out the title better than I can, I said, and laid the importunate question aside.

G. M.

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WILFRID HOLMES

WILFRID HOLMES was by many years younger than his brothers and sisters, all of whom were making their way in the world, the girls marrying and the boys doing well in different professions; the Army had claimed one, the Law another, and as a Civil Servant the third was helping to run the Empire in India.

The Holmes were tall men with long faces and small eyes. Wilfrid, the last, was larger-framed, more heavily built than his brothers; his long, oval face was fuller, and in him the family eyes were not less intelligent than his brothers' eyes, but weaker, announcing an indolence of mind and body so inveterate that he had just grown up in it without struggle, passing from childhood into boyhood and from boyhood into manhood clinging to the widow's skirts. Mrs. Holmes's husband having died when Wilfrid was a small child, Wilfrid had known a father's influence and authority only derivatively through his eldest brother, whom he dreaded, for every time Hector returned to pay his mother a visit at Bushfield, the family place, the question was asked: What is Wilfrid going to do with himself? Has he not yet decided on a profession?

Mrs. Holmes tried to soften criticisms of her spoilt child with stories of Wilfrid's different aspirations, and she told these with a gentle humour. Wilfrid, she said, is thinking of entering the Consular Service, and if you could get a letter from your old friend—— But, said the brother, who was staying at Bushfield at the moment,

will Wilfrid try to pass the examination, for there is one? Mrs. Holmes parried the question, and when Hector returned six months or a year later and Wilfrid's future was again discussed, she told with the same gentle humour that he was now thinking of astronomy as a profession, and had gone so far as to purchase a telescope. Every uncloudy night, she said, he has it out on the steps; Jupiter's Satellites can be seen through it, and Saturn's Ring. He knows the names of most of the stars, and speaks of the different ascensions. But, mother, what you tell me is mere star-gazing, otherwise idleness. Modern astronomy is little more than mathematics, and Wilfrid never showed any interest in mathematics at school, nor in classical studies, nor in games. Mrs. Holmes defended her yoe lamb, and spoke of a cricketing suit she had bought for Wilfrid—bats and wickets, shoes and gloves. Oh, he may have liked all these things, Hector answered, but not the game itself! And now that he has left school and come here to live with you, has he taken to riding or shooting? When you go to London does he attend dancing classes? You would like to know, Hector, if he wastes his time with young women? I am glad to say he does not.

A man—— It was on Hector's lips to say that a man who is indifferent to women is indifferent to all things, but he felt that words were unavailing and that Wilfrid would have to follow the course of his life like another. And to make his last days at home a pleasant thought for his mother—Hector was returning to India—he spoke kindly to Wilfrid, saying: I shall always remember, Wilfrid, your showing me your telescope. In the train (his mother and brother were accompanying him to Portsmouth) he spoke of the canals in Mars, his words awakening certain qualms of conscience in him lest they should influence Wilfrid to worry his mother to buy him

another telescope; but that night at the Theatre Royal, Portsmouth, one of the Gilbert and Sullivan operettes swept the firmament for ever from his mind, and his last words to Hector, whom he accompanied on board, were: I think I shall sell that telescope and buy a flute, words that darkened Hector's face. The cry: All ashore, however, enabled Wilfrid to escape without rebuke, and all that day and the next and till the end of the week Wilfrid could talk of nothing but flutes, and many and long were the walks that he and his mother took from instrument-maker to instrument-maker, Wilfrid never satisfied, till at last she said: Now, Wilfrid, you must make up your mind what flute you want. And it was after the purchase of two flutes and a piccolo that mother and son returned to Bushfield Park, Wilfrid with the intention of devoting his life to musical composition.

As there was no teacher in the neighbourhood of whom he approved, he sent to London for the score of the opera he had heard at Portsmouth, and applied himself to it with an assiduity that seemed to his mother to betoken a new Wilfrid. He knew the airs of *Patience*, and by comparing the notes that his flute uttered with those upon paper he learnt their values, approximately, as he confessed to his mother one day on her asking him if he was reading or playing by ear. I can read at sight now, mother, for I have discovered that it makes a great deal of difference if the note is black or white. Yes, Wilfrid, it does; but you are giving yourself a great deal of trouble trying to learn by yourself what anybody could teach you in a few weeks. She spoke to him of her old governess, whom she would like to ask to Bushfield for her holidays. A music-master, he said, could teach him better than a woman; all the same, he learnt from Miss McCabe how to play the piano a little; and

he continued his studies afterwards in London with an ancient bandmaster selected by himself, reaching within a year the stage of being able to write down a tune when it was dictated to him, without asking that it should be repeated unduly—three or four times were enough, if it was repeated slowly, and if he gave his ear, which was a slow one, wholly to the capture of it. His mother allowed him three pounds a week, one of which went to pay for his music lessons; and when his mother climbed the five flights that led to him one morning between ten and eleven (Wilfrid was rarely able to persuade himself out of the bedclothes before eleven) he came to the door, in answer to her repeated knocking, in his shirt and trousers, asking in an aggrieved tone who was there. Oh, mother, I didn't know it was you! he said, recognising her voice. Come in quickly, for I am making my cocoa, and if the milk boils over it will be spoilt. And the milk happening to boil over during his absence at the door, Mrs. Holmes expressed her regret. You will take an hour to dress yourself. Let me go and fetch the milk for you. It was my fault. She often spoke of this visit afterwards, mildly amused at his solicitude for his cocoa, imitating very well the tone of his voice when he said, I must go at once to fetch some more milk. And she told how she had sat watching Wilfrid stirring his cocoa, hearing him say that it took a long time to find out when the cocoa was properly mixed, and that it was hardly less difficult to make tea. To make tea properly, he said, the water has to be really boiling. And he told a long story of what he had suffered from a charwoman, who not only forgot to pour his tea into a second teapot within two minutes (anything over two minutes made the tea worthless, undrinkable), but left it on the hob, to keep it 'ot, she said; and when she did remember to put it into the second teapot she forgot to heat the pot.

first, and hotted it up upon the hob. I will make your tea for you in the future when you leave this garret and return with me to Bushfield, the mother answered. But she could not persuade her son to leave his garret. He was still attached to music, and had composed a number of airs which he played to her on his flute whenever she called to see him. She listened to him patiently, like a mother, and after each tune she said: I like that; that's very pretty, a very pretty tune indeed, sometimes venturing upon a criticism: But is not the last tune somewhat like the first that you played to me? Wilfrid played the two tunes over again and thought his mother fastidious, and she restrained herself always from saying: But, Wilfrid, the top line is not enough? Modern music is in the harmony.

Harmony was a word that rarely came into Wilfrid's talk about music, he being of the opinion that, whereas there were many harmonists, there were few melodists. Mrs. Holmes consulted the music-master, from whom she learnt that Wilfrid's ear was slow; he could not hear simultaneously the different parts of a fugue, and on being pressed still further, the bandmaster gave it as his opinion that Wilfrid should never look upon music as anything more than a hobby, a verdict that Mrs. Holmes received without surprise, the bandmaster's opinion having long been her opinion. But she loved her son too dearly to utter a word of discouragement. Instead she made provision for him in her will, confiding him to the care of her younger sister, who, when Wilfrid's mother passed away, did not forget to send her nephew a cheque for fifty pounds each half-year. And upon this money Wilfrid lived his lonely life, trying always to make both ends meet, living aloof, avoiding his relations instinctively. If one of these called, Wilfrid welcomed him, begged of him to stay to tea; and after tea he accom-

panied his relative, sometimes a brother, sometimes a cousin, to the station, and parted from him with such a show of courtesy and friendliness that he was surprised that Wilfrid did not return to supper, as he had promised that he would, next Sunday.

But months, sometimes years, passed without their seeing him, and again somebody would go forth and return with the truant from family life, who would again disappear, leaving them to their gentle disputations round the fire, seeking reasons for Wilfrid's aloofness, the true reason never spoken, everybody keeping it hidden away almost from himself. To speak it, or even to allow it a place in their thoughts, was to impugn their own conduct towards Wilfrid, to set themselves above him, to make it plain to him that he was their inferior. Whosoever cannot get his living dreads his relations, dreads their eyes and words, and of all their coming to bring him back to supper, for as they pass out of the squalor of his neighbourhood into fashionable London the windows and doorways begin to reproach him, and he detects a sneer in the eyes of the servant who opens the door to him. The pictures on the walls, the carpets under his feet, the food he eats, the wine he drinks, remind him of his inferiority; and one night on returning from Hampstead Wilfrid said, Never again will they walk me round their drawing-rooms, showing off their wealth! and he lay awake, attributing motives, and asking himself why they troubled to come to see him and to pester him with invitations. The answer to his questions came: That they may better discuss me and pity me and gloat over my property. But I never apply to them for help. Perhaps if I did they would not be so eager to see me. In these thoughts he lay awake, passing into sleep towards morning, awakening out of sleep a happier man than when he lay down, for about him was the

familiar room in which he read and wrote and played his flute.

As soon as he was out of bed his first task was the brushing of his clothes. A button to which he attached his braces hung by a single thread, but there was no need for Wilfrid to ask the landlady's help—he could sew on a button. He could clean his boots, too, and very often did, for there were other lodgers besides him in the house in which he lived, and the landlady and her drudge could not attend upon them all. If the relations of overnight could see me now! Wilfrid said to himself as he brushed. I wish they could, for they would see that I can do many things that they cannot. If I cannot get my own living, I can at least get my own breakfast. I can light a fire, and not one of them would know how to do that. Whereupon he opened the oven (the grate was an old one, with convenient hobs), took out some dry sticks, and very soon a fire was blazing. And, still thinking of his relations, he went to the cupboard, cut his bacon, melted the butter in the pan before dropping in the eggs; and before the landlady knocked to ask if she might do his room Wilfrid had finished his breakfast and was nearly dressed. Yes, Mrs. Plowden, he answered, you can come in; I have only to tie my neck-tie and slip on my coat. And they fell to talking of the present prices of sausages, steak, and mutton chops. I think I shall treat myself to-day, Mrs. Plowden, to a little custard pudding. If you are busy with your music to-day, Mr. Holmes, I shall be glad to make your pudding for you, an offer which Wilfrid accepted, though he would have preferred to make his own pudding and cook it in his own room. But he knew that a lodger such as he was must become a friend of the landlady, and that he could do this by accepting and rendering services, by courtesy and by conversation; for Mrs. Plowden wearied of her servant's

talk, which was always, she confided to Wilfrid, about men, and was glad to come upstairs, to listen, as she put it, to a 'toon' on the flute.

He was, however, careful not to enter into conversation with Emma, for he was aware that in Mrs. Plowden's eyes he was a big, fine-looking man; and he had also learnt by experience that women are jealous, and that the pleasure Mrs. Plowden took in coming upstairs for little private talks with him would be embittered if more than three words at a time were exchanged between him and Emma, and of all if he were to entertain Emma to an air on the flute; so he never played to her, and, by reticence, tact, and courtesy, and by never playing the flute late at night or when other lodgers were in the house, he had managed to obtain a position in No. 31 Goldhawk Road, Shepherd's Bush, that seemed unassailable. But tact and reticence and courtesy give way sometimes under sudden stress of circumstance, and one day Wilfrid discovered the score of a French operette that he had sought vainly for years, in a rag-and-bone shop, and, bringing it home, he spent a great part of the night playing it over softly, so softly that he believed no one could hear him. In this he was mistaken, however, for next morning the landlady, when she came to do his room, wore a look of weariness upon her face, and not many words were exchanged between them before she told him that his room would be wanted at the end of the week.

Wilfrid's courtesy and his promise not to play again after twelve o'clock, and never to play, morning or evening, till the lady on the drawing-room floor had left the house, softened Mrs. Plowden's resolution. You see, Mrs. Plowden, I had been trying for years to get the score of Hervé's *La Reine de Navarre*, and came upon it by chance, in an old rag-and-bone shop, the only score in

existence, perhaps, certainly one of the very few, for the opera was only played three times—it was a complete failure in Paris. I have been seeking it for years. I shouldn't have played last night, I know, but, Mrs. Plowden, I assure you I played so softly that I did not think anyone in the house could have heard. I will call upon the lady on the drawing-room floor, and if you would not like me to do that, I will apologise to her when I meet her on the stairs. I can assure her that, so far as I am concerned, she will never know another troubled night.

Mrs. Plowden's face darkened, and as she tossed the bedclothes hither and thither she muttered that she was not sure that the drawing-room floor piano was not much more noisy in the house than Mr. Holmes's flute, words that encouraged Wilfrid to believe that he had only to propitiate the lady on the drawing-room floor. And, meeting her on the staircase some five minutes after his interview with Mrs. Plowden, he told her how sorry he was his flute-playing had disturbed her rest, speaking with such courtesy that she regretted having made the complaint, and to make amends for it she invited him to her piano, saying that she would like to run through the score with him. Wilfrid accepted her invitation, and, when the slight interest of *La Reine de Navarre* was exhausted, their talk turned on composition, Wilfrid admitting that he had been engaged on an opera for some time. The lady urged him to run upstairs and fetch it, saying that it would interest her to play the accompaniments. But they are not written, he answered, only the top line.

For a moment this seemed a serious difficulty, but the lady offered to improvise; and Wilfrid came in in such excellent time and tune that she began to foresee a possible combination—Wilfrid supplying the melodies

and she the accompaniments, in this way writing an opera between them, a hope that might have been fulfilled had not an unexpected and cruel accident caused Wilfrid to seek another lodging, and one as far as possible from Shepherd's Bush. He went to Notting Hill overcome with shame, unable to understand how it was that Mrs. Plowden had declined to accept his word or Edith's, her daughter, who had returned to Shepherd's Bush unexpectedly. He had intended to ask Mrs. Plowden for another blanket, but had forgotten to do so (the slight misunderstanding that had occurred between him and Mrs. Plowden on account of his flute had put everything else out of his mind), and, finding sleep impossible, he had bethought himself of a blanket from the spare room, never dreaming that Miss Plowden had returned home. To make matters worse it so happened that Mrs. Plowden was pressing her daughter to tell the whole story of her betrayal when Wilfrid appeared in his nightshirt on the threshold.

Good God, who would have thought it! cried Mrs. Plowden.

Mother, he's not the one, Edith answered without hesitation.

Mrs. Plowden, I beg you to believe that I came here for an extra blanket, interjected Wilfrid, and knew nothing of your daughter's return.

Mother, you are wronging an innocent man, Edith implored.

But their assurances did not deflect Mrs. Plowden from her purpose, and for many months Wilfrid heard in his thoughts the unfortunate voices still raging—Mrs. Plowden asking intermittently if it wasn't he who was it, and Edith always refusing to give up the name of her betrayer. The last words that had passed between Wilfrid and Edith were: Mother would have believed you

if it had not been—— Wilfrid had not heard the end of the sentence, Mrs. Plowden having hustled him off her doorstep. And now Wilfrid rose from his chair, asking himself what purpose might be served by recalling unpleasant memories. But memories are often very insistent and will not be repelled, and he sat terrified at the thought of his escape. If Edith had not been an honourable girl Mrs. Plowden might have taken him into court, and the magistrate might have made out a maintenance order against him—five shillings a week, which he could not have paid. And his aunt! He had stood on the brink of ruin, but had escaped the worst. All the same, he had lost his very comfortable lodging. For the house in Notting Hill was not nearly so well suited to his needs as the house in Shepherd's Bush. He missed the hobs and the oven, Mrs. Plowden's attendance, and the accompaniments, which threw light on his melodies, inspiring new versions. If Edith had only told the name of the blackguard who—— But she hadn't. Such is life, he muttered, and continued to work at his opera, *The Mulberry Tree*, till the story he was illustrating began to seem disjointed, broken-backed. Any one of the professional librettists could put it right in a minute by a trick, he said, but I should like to have it undisfigured by artifices, and only time will be able to do that for me.

So he turned to the second interest of his life, the legend of *Tristan and Isolde*, which, in his opinion, had never yet been traced to its source. His researches brought him so often to the British Museum that he felt it would be a saving for him to live in Bloomsbury; and he went thither, hoping to find a grate with an oven like the one in Shepherd's Bush. But the hob grate seemed to have disappeared from the neighbourhood, old though it was, and in his search he did not come upon one of

those small mending tailors who can turn an old suit of clothes into what looks like a new one. These were grave disadvantages, but he was nearer his work and he had been much encouraged lately by the discovery that he could work out Isolde's history by means of place-names. Nothing is more lasting than the names of places; in the course of ages a letter or two may be omitted or transposed, but the name remains practically the same. And the art of the imaginative historian lies in the divination of missing letters; the moment they are restored light breaks, and very soon Wilfrid was in possession of the names of certain minor chiefs who had accepted Isolde's father as Overlord. Another week, another month at most, he said, rising from his desk one day, and my case will be complete. And so absorbed was he in his conjectures that he did not hear one of the librarians ask him if he had succeeded in carrying Isolde's family history further back than the fifth century. The librarian had to repeat his question, and, awaking from his reverie, Wilfrid answered: I think the facts show that the family history can be traced back to Tara. One of her ancestors ruled there, I believe. In another month I shall be able to tell you for certain. Well, the reason I spoke, said the librarian, is that there is some talk now that the story came to the French chronicler, Chrétien de Troyes, from Brittany, and that the Bretons got it from the Celts of Cornwall, who in turn got it from the Welsh. It is being pointed out that the old Welsh pedigrees tell of an Arthur, a king of the district round Chester, who had a cousin, King March, a minor king, who married a lady called Eisylyt. As you can see the Irish coast easily, Lleyn—— The librarian did not finish his sentence, so busy was he gathering in the books that readers were thrusting upon him. A hurried time, not one for prolonged talk, and while

Wilfrid stood among the jostling crowd, dumbfounded, the bell rang, and the last readers were roused from their books by weary attendants.

A small rain was falling; umbrellas were opened in the pillared portico; and this crowd, comprising a thousand different interests and intellects, always brought the same thought into his mind—that it was strange that so many people should have a small sum of money in their pockets; and he never failed to think that if these trickles of the world's wealth stopped for a week the world would split and fall to pieces—a ship wrenched apart by waves, each carrying a spar, a mast, a part of the hull away. But to-day as he stood admiring the crowd he remembered suddenly that his aunt's fifty pounds had failed to trickle into his pocket that morning. For the first time there had been a delay, and it seemed to him ominous that the delay should have coincided with the news that a new theory regarding the legend of *Tristan and Isolde* was being considered. He had looked forward to receiving his aunt's cheque, but that morning his head was so full of his work at the British Museum that he had hardly given the matter a thought; and he might not have done so now if the librarian had not mentioned the possibly Welsh origin of the story. Two misfortunes on the same day seemed to predict trouble for him, mayhap a break in his life. His aunt had never failed before. But has she even failed to-day? he said, almost angry with himself. A letter is often delayed in the post, and on my return home I shall find hers. Has any letter come for me? he asked.

No letter has come this afternoon, sir. Were you expecting one?

Yes, he answered, and ran upstairs. Now what would happen to him, and what would happen to the *Isolde* legend, if his aunt failed to send her fifty pounds?

At that moment he heard a knock far away in the street, and as the postman approached the house that Wilfrid lived in each knock became louder, clearer. The knocking stopped at last, and Wilfrid asked himself what the cause of the delay might be. He had never known the postman loiter as he loitered this evening. Was there an undue number of registered letters to be signed for? Were they all out at 54? The knocking began again; once more it stopped, and this time the man was kept waiting on the opposite side of the street not many doors away. He knocked again and again, but nobody came to the door, and it was all Wilfrid could do to keep himself from running across to ask him if he had a letter for No. 45. As he was about to start the man moved away from the door to come over to deliver letters. He passed 45, and Wilfrid was driven to consider how it was that his aunt's cheque had failed to arrive on the appointed day. He was on the last flight of stairs in his nightshirt and trousers in the morning when the landlady opened the door. No, Mr. Holmes, there's nothing for you this morning.

The day passed in watching for the postman, and every time he went by without delivering a letter, or delivered letters for the other lodgers, Wilfrid pondered anew the fact that for the last twenty years his cheque had arrived to the very day. Was his aunt dead? The thought was a terrible one, and it was followed by a hardly less terrible thought—that her last cheque was the end of her bounty! But that could not be—she would have written to tell him. He began to count her years, and, giving up the count in despair, he remembered that in the case of her death (which must come sooner or later) he would have to apply to another relation, to his brother in India, who would give him his choice between Bushfield Park and the workhouse, and

with hard words, saying: You have never earned five shillings in your life. You shall go to Bushfield as caretaker at three pounds a week. What answer would he make? All the world would side with his brother. Nobody would understand why he could not live at Bushfield; nobody would understand that he could not earn his living. Nobody had ever understood this except his mother, and nobody ever would. He laid no blame on anybody; he did not understand it himself. He was healthy, strong, educated, and more intelligent than many of the men he met at the Museum. But he could not earn his living, and, worst of all, he could not tell why. There seemed to be no excuse for refusing to live at Bushfield. Nobody would understand—he did not understand. A frightened look came into his face, for he saw in that instant a lonely figure, a confessed failure, amid sad shrubberies and dismal woods. I have always lived in London, he said, and will die in London, come what may. But he could not live in London without some money, and only one sovereign remained to him. A sovereign between me and the streets, he said to himself, and fell to thinking how much life for him it represented if he restricted his diet to bread-and-margarine. Three weeks, quite that, a month, perhaps, he continued, with bread at its present rate. But his rent—six shillings a week! His landlady would give him a week's credit, no doubt, but she might not. And in his dire necessity he wrote to one of his brothers for five pounds, a thing he had never done, it being his pride to live apart and to owe them nothing. He did not hate them, but——

His thoughts melted into memories of his youth, memories of slights received from them all. Some were kinder than others, but he knew he was looked upon as the family fool, and his pride had been to show them

that he did not need their help. But this last barrier of self-respect was broken down. He had had to write to his brother for five pounds! The five pounds came by the next post, and now he would be able to live for quite a long while, with care. As he sat working out how much he might spend daily he stopped to think what his aunt's death would mean to him when she died. He did not believe she was dead; but she would have to die sooner or later. He might die before her; life is good in this that it provides us with a way out of our difficulties, and he fell to thinking that he had not been feeling very well lately; his doctor had even spoken to him of the possible necessity of an operation, for which he would have to go into a hospital. If his aunt were to live, she might pay for the operation, but he would not like to ask her for any more money than she gave him; so it behoved him to strive for some employment that would bring him in two pounds a week. If he could find some editorial work that would bring him in two-pounds-ten a week!

The thought of an extra ten shillings a week and what it would buy for him awoke him from the dazed stupor into which he had fallen, the consequence of an empty stomach; for he had lived on bread-and-margarine and drunk only water for more than a week, and was beginning to feel that if this diet were to continue uninterrupted his strength to resist his ill might leave him. So with his stomach turned resolutely against his daily fare he went out to buy himself a couple of ounces of tea and an egg, and as he sat stirring his tea he bethought himself of his many attempts to earn a little money by journalism. He had once paid a provincial newspaper a part of his small inheritance for permission to write leading articles, and when he had written fifty-one he had cut his contributions from the

different numbers of the papers in which they had appeared. After correction they were sent to a printer to be reset, and the proofs were forwarded to a London editor with a letter requesting the latter to read the articles, and, if he approved of them, to invite Mr. Holmes to join the staff of the London daily. He enclosed stamps for the return of these samples, and they came back to him with a printed form saying that owing to lack of space the Editor was unable to avail himself of the contributions, which he returned with thanks. But after a little while he forgot to enclose the postage-stamps, and his articles were not returned to him; and in answer to questions addressed to the Editor he received a printed form telling him that the Editor could not undertake to correspond with the authors of rejected manuscripts.

As an earnest of his will to work, several sets of proofs were sent to his brothers, who did not return them; others were lost in his transits from one lodging to another. One set remained, however, but Wilfrid was loath to send forth these articles again. If an Editor had written him a personal letter containing a word of encouragement he might have—— A thought breaking into his memories of his past attempts to find employment brought him to his feet. He knew a little French, and there must be a newspaper whose staff was depleted by the war. And it was in this hope that he went forth every day to seek his fortune in the Strand and Fleet Street. Occasionally he was invited upstairs and allowed to plead with elderly men in armchairs, who gave him sometimes a few minutes of their attention, but before he arrived at the end of his patter he had begun to read in their eyes that he was not wanted. Some of the less important newspapers asked him if he had had any experience, and he answered them that he

had edited the *East Anglian Advertiser* for some time, offering some of the articles that he contributed to that newspaper to be reprinted. Some, he said, I feel sure are as topical to-day as on the day they were written, and he offered to send these for the Editor's consideration, but the Editor said he would prefer to read something that had not yet been published. Wilfrid promised to send an article, and returned to his lodgings trying to think of a subject that would appeal to the Editor, his thoughts reverting to the belief that Isolde must have been an Irish princess, for the French chronicler had so written it, and there was no other evidence, so——

His thoughts were interrupted by the postman's knock, and, listening to receding footsteps and fainter knocks, he once again began to ask himself if his aunt's death was the cause of the delay. Should he write for news of her? Of what use? If she were dead, her daughter would have written. His aunt, who knew of his necessities, had never failed before, nor would she fail this time; all the same—— He pulled a sheet of paper towards him with the intention of writing to her, and in doing this he disturbed a heap of papers, bringing into view some numbers of the *Daily Courier*. It must have been the landlady who left these for me, he said, and began to read of a blackbird who could whistle a tune of six or eight notes. The publication of the tune had encouraged other readers to send examples of blackbird melody, and a correspondence was in progress regarding the origin of these tunes, some correspondents averring that the blackbirds had not invented but learnt them, other correspondents holding that, since the cuckoo produced two distinct notes, there was no reason to suppose that any other bird might not produce eight. It was not likely that all the blackbirds that whistled

tunes had learnt them in a captivity from which the birds had escaped, and the point was made that the musical ear varied in different birds. At last a correspondent wrote that he had taught a blackbird who frequented his garden part of a well-known air. The bird whistled correctly till he came to a minor third, and then, conscious of his failure to catch the note, he broke into an angry Chuck, chuck, chuck, in the shrubbery. Wilfrid remembered a bullfinch that whistled a once popular song, *Pretty Polly Perkins of Paddington Green*. The bird's cage hung in the kitchen, and the best way to persuade him out of his silence was to rattle the plates on the dresser. The sound of the plates inspired him, and he whistled the song in fragments, breaking off suddenly. Why not write about the bullfinch? Wilfrid asked himself, and before he had made up his mind another thought came into his mind. It was to pick eight bars of tune from one of the many scores that met his eyes when he looked round his room, all of which were unknown.

Who, except myself, he asked, could whistle a single note from *Le Canard a Trois Becs* or from *Les Quenouilles de Verre*? Or if I were to send one of my own tunes the publication might bring me the harmonist I have been waiting for so long. A moment after he remembered the notes that a blackbird used to sing in one of the shrubberies that surround Bushfield Park, the notes that had inspired—— His face lighted up for the first time since the day he left the Museum in the midst of a twofold misfortune, and, catching up a pen, he wrote the notes.

I shall point out in a second letter that the phrase as likely as not comes out of one of the many French operettes composed in the seventies and eighties. The wiseacres will sit surrounded with scores, reading, read-

ing, and for ever reading, and then the question will come: How did the blackbird learn a tune unknown in England? The Editor will send for me, and perhaps will give me a job.

DEAR SIR,—I have followed with interest the letters you are publishing concerning the musical ear of the blackbird, a little surprised, however, to learn that the bird that picked up the well-known song mentioned by the correspondent signing himself X. could not manage the minor third. The bullfinch would catch the note, of a certainty, and I can but think that the blackbird I once heard sing the first bars of a waltz in the garden, or rather yard, enclosed by high walls shadowed by tall elms, would speedily have conquered and retained the minor third in his every subsequent rendering of the song. He alighted on the branch under which I and a friend were sitting at tea, and sang the tune twice over. To hear the first bars of a French waltz (part of a French operette I should guess it to be, but perhaps one of your correspondents will be able to identify it) was not a little bewildering. The friend with whom I was sitting at tea is no relation of Mrs. Harris; he exists in the flesh, and will testify that the bird's song was noted by me on a scrap of paper which he handed to me, that no interval was changed, and that the time was waltz time. I am, Sincerely yours. WILFRID HOLMES.

The letter was published in the *Daily Courier*, and the conjecture that the little waltz was an extract from a French operette aroused many minds out of the daily torpor of existence, many deeming it to be a quatrain from one of Lecoq's early and little-known works. Other writers detected a Germanic flavour, and Offenbach was spoken of, and then Suppé. Somebody thought that he

remembered a waltz very like the blackbird's in an opera by Serpett. An almost forgotten composer, Wilfrid said to himself as he sat eating his bread-and-margarine, who never caught the public ear with an air. I should have thought that his name was forgotten by everybody but myself; but there's always somebody who remembers. Now what did he write? An opera for the Variétés; but the name?

He sat searching his memory for a long time, and, giving up the search for the moment, he said: Litoff's name doesn't seem to have occurred to anybody. And, drawing a sheet of paper towards him, he began a letter to the Editor of the *Daily Courier* asking to be allowed to write the musical criticisms for the paper. He had not written many lines when he was disturbed by his landlady coming to tell him that a gentleman from the *Daily Courier* had called to see him and was waiting in the passage.

Will you be kind enough to bring him upstairs, Mrs. Douglas, or would you prefer that I went down to see him in your parlour?

There are people in my parlour waiting to see me; I think I had better bring him up to you, sir.

Yes, yes, bring him up; or shall I go down and speak to him? Wilfrid answered, his lethargic nature quickening to an intenser life than he had ever known before. And while hesitating at the stairhead he heard Mrs. Douglas's voice saying: Will you come this way, sir? As soon as the footsteps reached the drawing-room floor he hurried back to his room to receive his visitor, who, he doubted not, was bringing him good news; news he was bringing him for certain, and any news was good news.

The Editor of the *Daily Courier* has asked me to call and thank you for the little tune and the interesting letter that accompanied it. He would have written to

you himself if he had not been suddenly called away, and the journalist began to tell of a Cabinet crisis, Wilfrid giving him an attentive ear, in the hope that his appreciation of his interlocutor's narrative would influence the account of him the Editor would get from his colleague; and he held his soul in patience till the journalist came to a sudden break in his story. The rest, he said, is on the knees of the Gods—and he apologised for having been so long-winded. Wilfrid protested, and the journalist revealed the object of his visit, which was to ask Mr. Wilfrid Holmes if he knew the name of the composer of the waltz measure. If the waltz be a French one, as I believe yourself has suggested, the bird was most probably a French bird imported into England; probably, I say, not necessarily, for most waltzes, French and German, if a waltz can be said to have any nationality, are known to—— I was writing, Wilfrid interrupted, a letter to the Editor of the *Daily Courier* dealing with that very question when you called. He picked up his half-finished letter from the table and continued: My proposal to the Editor was to tell him the name of the waltz if in return for my doing so he engaged me on the staff of the paper. I can write English and French correctly, and know enough music to write criticisms, and my knowledge of light French music is as complete as anybody's you'd be likely to find in London. For years I've collected the least-known scores; many of those you see are out of print, and to get a sight of them you would have to cross over to France and investigate the archives of most of the theatres in the boulevards. *La Reine de Navarre* is a very scarce score, *Les Quenouilles de Verre* still scarcer, and for the score *Héloïse et Abélard* you would have to go to the Bibliothèque Nationale. Your Editor may be able to procure the scores of *Le Roi l'a dit* and *La Boite*

de Pandore through Messrs. Chappell, but I doubt if Messrs. Chappell would be able to supply *La Fiancée du Roi de Garbe*, *Pont des Soupirs*, or *La Belle Poule*. I run through these on my flute when the house is empty (our lodgers are more tolerant to the piano than to the flute), and in every one of these operettes there are some pretty passages, better than any to be found in better-known works.

Nobody but you knows these forgotten scores? asked the journalist. I am sure that mine is the only copy in London of *La Fiancée du Roi de Garbe*. And if you did not run these scores over on your flute they would lie mute, replied the journalist. That thought has often come into my mind whilst standing by this window on a summer evening, and the journalist, beguiled by pity or curiosity, he knew not which, began to ask Wilfrid if the flute played an important part in the score of *La Fiancée du Roi de Garbe*.

A good writer never forgets the flute, Wilfrid replied, for without the flute the orchestra would be inhuman. The journalist raised his eyes. The flute represents the human voice in the orchestra, Wilfrid continued, his face suddenly changing from gay to grave. He would have dearly loved to show his beautiful-keyed flute, a present from his aunt, to the journalist. It was in pawn, alas! But, remembering his piccolo suddenly, he opened a drawer, and, taking from it a sheet of manuscript music, he pinned it to the wall by the window and said he was going to play the great air from his opera, *The Mulberry Tree*. And upon a diminutive instrument, hardly larger than a toothbrush, Wilfrid whistled out a simple air that the journalist began to perceive to be the summary of the author's musical imagination, it never being far distant from all the subsequent pieces that were taken from the drawer.

But the top line, said the journalist, is but a small part of the music contained in a modern opera. Modern music can hardly be said to exist apart from the harmonies that sustain it. A modern air rises out of the harmony for a moment only, like a flag from the flag-staff. And then there's the orchestration. The orchestration, Wilfrid answered, is mere colouring matter; the harmony, I admit, is essential. And what you or the Editor of the *Daily Courier* might do for me is to give me a letter to —. Wilfrid mentioned a name famous in modern music, saying: A great musician, no doubt, but one who cannot write melody. Now I can, but in harmony I am deficient. What do you think? But, said the journalist, taking a piece of music from the heap, I see that you have not only composed the airs sung by the soprano, the tenor, and the bass, you have also written some concerted pieces—here is a quintet. And without some knowledge of harmony, at least of counterpoint, I don't understand how you could have written it. I will play it to you, Wilfrid replied; and when he had played the quintet to the journalist on his piccolo he explained that he had followed the form of the quintet in *La Fiancée du Roi de Garbe*, writing other tunes, of course. And now, if you will allow me, I will play the air that the *prima donna* sings out of the branches of the mulberry tree in the second act. From a safe hiding-place among the leaves she has heard all the plotting of her enemies, who have discovered that she is an heiress to an uninhabited island in which is hidden immense treasure. After listening to the air, the journalist sat looking into Wilfrid's large face, striving to read his history out of his little eyes. Of course, said Wilfrid, the air will sound much richer, completer, when it gets its accompaniment, for, as you say, in modern music the air rises out of the accompaniment;

it is dependent upon it, too dependent to my taste, but still it cannot be denied that harmony is more important to-day than it was when Bellini and Donizetti were writing operas. All the same, melody is what the public follows. Don't you think that the Editor would give me a letter of introduction? Or perhaps you think that Mr. X. can write melody?

Your question, Mr. Holmes, can best be answered by another, the journalist replied. Before entering into a discussion as to whether Mr. X. can or cannot write melody, I would like to ask you if you think that Mr. X. is aware of his melodic deficiencies. Well, said Wilfrid, they should have become apparent to him by this time—at which the journalist laughed. But he stopped laughing suddenly, for Wilfrid's courage gave way before this last rebuke. I am afraid, he said, drawing his hand across his eyes, dashing aside some tears, that there is very little hope for me. And, walking up and down the room, he related the story of the delayed cheque, saying that for twenty years his aunt had never failed to send him his cheque. Only once before did it arrive late, and then only a day late. But now fifteen days have passed without my getting any tidings of her; she may be dead. It was three days before I noticed the delay, so absorbed was I in the legend of *Tristan and Isolde*, a work on which I have been engaged for the last twenty years.

At work on the legend of *Tristan and Isolde* for twenty years! said the journalist.

Yes, quite that, Wilfrid replied; and the journalist, anxious to help him, began to ask him what discoveries he had made. And Wilfrid, taking courage, tried to relate his conjectures, till overcome by a sudden weakness he said: I cannot go on talking. I have lived for the last ten days on bread-and-margarine. Yesterday I

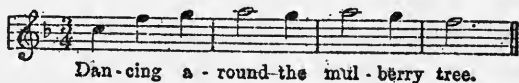
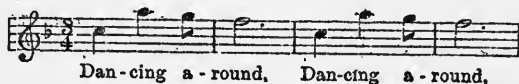
had to buy a packet of cocoa and some milk; the success of my letter in the *Daily Courier* tempted me to risk the extravagance, and I hoped for a post on the paper. I hoped that something would happen, but nothing has. The journalist asked Wilfrid why he did not write to his relations for the loan of enough money to carry him over till he received his allowance, and learnt that Wilfrid had broken with all his brothers and sisters. They are always quarrelling among themselves, he said, and I try to keep outside of the family strife, and the only way to do it is to avoid seeing them.

This little confession, so sincere and so artless, awakened the journalist's pity still further, and then, his pity quickening to a sort of literary interest, he began to speak of the family as the worst enemy of the individual, with a view to leading Wilfrid into confidences. The journalist had some literary pretensions, and, foreseeing literary material in Wilfrid, he listened, saying to himself: He is typical of many; in every boarding-house in London there is the lag-end of a family, playing the piano in the evenings. We accuse these waifs of idleness, but they were born idle and cannot be else than idle, for they are without the needful instinct to pick up a living, or have lost it, as wild birds do after being kept in cages. This man's mother kept him in a cage long after he should have been put out to work. And then, the journalist's thoughts turning from the general to the particular, he began to consider if he might advise one of his editors to take on Wilfrid as a musical critic—For with all his shortcomings he knows a little music, the keys, doubtless, whereas the ordinary musical critic cannot tell one key from another. But his copy would be unprintable. And certain that there was nothing to be done for Wilfrid in journalism, he began to think how he might take his leave. A

knock came to the door. A letter has just come for you, Mr. Holmes. And from my aunt! he cried, forgetful of the journalist and Mrs. Douglas. She has been very unwell lately but is better now, and she sends a cheque for two hundred pounds. Two hundred pounds! he said, and held the cheque out to the journalist in trembling fingers. I feel as if I could buy half London. So you do not care that I should recommend you for the post of musical critic, if perchance I should hear of a vacancy?

I shall now be able, Wilfrid answered, to fill in the last links of the chain of evidence which shows that——

The moment seemed favourable to the journalist to take his leave, and it was not till he had left the house and was half-way down the street that he remembered he had not asked Wilfrid which illustrious composer was the author of the waltz tune that the blackbird had learnt in France, or from Wilfrid Holmes himself. Most likely the author of the tune is Holmes himself, he said stopping, for that moment the musical phrase that came from a top window seemed to represent, and completely, the man he had left—one of those weak, timid, harmless souls, come out of the mould that Nature reserves for some great purpose known only to herself, mayhap the preservation of pity and compassion in the world. And, humming the little tune over to himself as he went towards the railway-station, he said: A humble aspiration, part of a chorus from *The Mulberry Tree*, no doubt.



PRISCILLA AND EMILY LOFFT

A BLACKBIRD whistled in the garden when Emily flung the drawing-room door open and gazed into the emptiness of the old faded room, her eyes falling straightway upon a portrait painted in clear tones of two children sitting on a green bank overshadowed by trees, turning the leaves of a picture book, twins, seemingly, so like were they one to the other, light-hearted girls, with brown ringlets showering about their faces. Emily had just returned from Priscilla's grave, and the portrait telling a sunny past so plainly, warned her that henceforth she would be alone—she knew not for how long; and too terrified for tears, she began to ask herself if she could continue her life in this old house that she and Priscilla had grown up in from childhood to womanhood, everything in it associated with her sister, every room, every table and chair, dinner services and tea services, the books on the shelves and on the tables. All these things had belonged to Priscilla as much as they had to herself, and now they belonged only to her.

The old Victorian paper was still on the walls, hardly more stained or faded than it was on the first day they saw it; and in spite of her desire to put all memories behind her, she remembered her delight and Priscilla's delight at the tapestry screens in rich wools, the faint water-colours on the walls, mills and ruins and mountain streams, the school exercises of their aunts. Aunt Clara and Aunt Margaret and Aunt Jane were dead; but their handiwork remained to tell of them. Priscilla and she

had often talked of repapering the room, of replacing the squab sofa by a comfortable Chesterfield. It was only last week they were considering these things, and that the red damask curtains needed cleaning. The carpets would have had to come up. . . . If Priscilla had lived another month, the house would have been in the hands of the workmen; had she lived another two months, all would have been changed; and Emily asked herself if it would be harder for her to live in a new house, a house repapered, repainted, and refurnished, a house that would bear no memory of Priscilla, or to live in this old house in which her sister's presence lingered like a ghost. Every piece of furniture, every picture, reminded her of something she had said to Priscilla or Priscilla had said to her. If that bird would only cease, she muttered, and fell to thinking that she had hated to hear it sing on the day that Priscilla died. Yes, it had sung that day—she had heard it, and to-day it was singing, the day of the funeral, forgetful of Priscilla, who had never forgotten to scatter crumbs under the great apple tree in which it sang, or to bring a dish of water for it to drink from and to bathe in.

A blackbird was whistling in the apple boughs the evening they had come up from Mayo to live with Aunt Clara at number four, Smith's Buildings—two little children of ten, dressed in black, for their father was dead. But neither of them understood the meaning of death at that time, and Priscilla had cried out and she had cried out to their aunt to be allowed to go into the lovely garden. It wasn't a lovely garden at all then, but a wilderness, though there were many hawthorns overtopping the railings, a great ash by the gate, and a little alley of lilac bushes; and tired though they were from the long railway journey, they would have liked to run round the garden, to play perhaps a game of hide-

and-seek among the lilac bushes. So it was with much sorrow that they heard their aunt tell that nobody in Smith's Buildings cared to go into the garden; it was taboo because everybody living in the five houses could go into it, a reason that their minds could not apprehend, for they did not know then that a benefit extended to all appeals to none in particular. And they had gone to bed asking themselves why nobody went into the garden just because the people from the other houses might go into it. And next day and the next they cast longing eyes upon the rood of ground, filled with apple trees and lilacs and hawthorns, and begged so hard to go and play in it that Aunt Clara had perforce to think of what arrangement might be come to with the agent for the property. Her nieces were little heiresses, each owning a property in the west of Ireland that produced about three hundred a year. Out of this six hundred a year we can easily afford to pay a gardener, Aunt Clara said, and the agent was invited to call, the proposal made to him being that Miss Lofft should have the exclusive possession of the garden on condition that she paid for its upkeep, a thing that the other tenants had refused to do. Why, they asked, should they pay for the upkeep of a garden that they never entered and did not wish to enter? But if I pay for the upkeep, and make a fine border of London Pride, and fill the beds with snapdragons, Canterbury bells, honesty, columbines, Madonna lilies, pansies, and put holly-hocks along the wall, all the other tenants will benefit by the scent and colour of the garden, Aunt Clara had said, an argument that the agent accepted, asking, however, for some rent; four pounds a year was the price of their playground, that was all, and they had enjoyed this rood of ground all their lives, since they were ten to the present day.

She dropped her head into the cushion and lay shaken with grief till she could weep no more, and when she raised her face, swollen with tears, the blackbird, that had been silent for long, broke into another rich lay, calling her thoughts again to the distant but clear past of her childhood, and the fine days under the apple tree with her sister, dressing dolls or learning the lessons that they took to the convent school at the corner of the Green. Priscilla was a little slow at her lessons, and though she looked so demure in that picture, almost dull, that was the fault of the artist; for she was not demure, at least she was not dull, and in the middle of learning French verbs would pick up her hoop and trundle it round the garden with so much joy that Emily had to pick up her hoop and trundle it after her, though she would have liked to master her lessons first. But Priscilla always had her way with her, and her thoughts dropped into consideration of her love for her sister; an almost mystical attachment it had often seemed to her, going back to the time when they had lain in the womb together. Priscilla had never seemed another being to her, but her second self, her shadow, her ghost, each akin to the other as the sound and its echo. In appearance they were the same, and she remembered how the Reverend Mother had once said: You are as like as two casts come out of the same mould. She had said something more than that to the nun standing by, but Emily had only heard half the sentence, something about the master-hand having been over one, whereas—the rest of the sentence she did not catch, but guessed it to be a disparagement of Priscilla, whom the convent did not appreciate, for Priscilla did not seem to them to be shaping into a prize pupil. Prize pupils were all the convent cared for, the superficial qualities with which educational grants are earned.

They were indeed as alike as two casts come out of the same mould, and this likeness was not a mere chance; it penetrated from the surface into the heart and brain. Aunt Clara had realised the importance of their likeness one to the other better than the Reverend Mother had, and dressed them alike so that others might see it, and of all, that Emily and Priscilla might be conscious of it always. So they had grown up to look upon themselves not as two but as one, and when it came for her to take Priscilla to the dressmaker, after their aunt's death, she had never allowed any change to be made. If Mrs. Symond said: I think you might wear this ribbon with advantage, she always answered: I think, Mrs. Symond, that we both like the ribbon you speak of. One day Mrs. Symond had asked them when they were going to be presented at Court. Of course she did, for two debutantes meant many dresses for her to make. And to persuade them to do what she herself had always refrained from doing for Priscilla's sake, Mrs. Symond called her assistant, and asked her to show off the dresses they were making that year. The prettiest fashions that have appeared for many a year, the dressmaker said. And they were shown berthas, flounces, plumes, stomachers, lappets, and veils. But we are not going to the Castle, are we? Priscilla had whispered, for you know, Emily, I never should have the courage to dance with a man I didn't know. But if he didn't know you, he wouldn't ask you, Emily answered. I never could grasp that three-step, Emily. I should feel such a fool. And as Emily could not go alone to the Castle, she postponed their presentation at Court till next year.

Looking back on that day at Mrs. Symond's, Emily felt that it was not because Priscilla was afraid of dancing with men who had only just been introduced to her,

or could not dance the three-step (Priscilla danced very well—the dancing-master had always said so), that she had shrunk, frightened at the thought of the Castle, but because some instinct warned her that they would meet their fate at the Castle. Priscilla may well have had a premonition that at the Castle a man would rob her of her sister. But we cannot escape our fate; and they might just as well have gone to the Castle to meet different men, to dance with them, aye, to marry them, for though marriage sunders, it is not as irreparable as death. It might have been better if she had married James Mease. But none can escape her fate. Theirs was waiting for them in the Shelbourne Hotel, whither they went to see the dresses of some friends who were going to the Drawing-Room.

It was that evening she had met James Mease, a young man who at first had not attracted her—almost repelled her; but she had come to like him, and during the Castle season they saw a great deal of each other. She had lost her head, thinking of nothing else for six weeks but James Mease, who, though almost a stranger to her, had made her think she was willing to leave Priscilla to go to live with him; Priscilla was willing that it should be so. And Emily fell to thinking of Priscilla's kindness, never complaining, never saying to her: If you marry this young man I shall be left alone, but trying always to efface herself, unwilling to come between her sister and her sister's happiness. A sad happiness was that month of courtship, a great cloud coming up in her blue sky at the end of the three weeks, when James's father and mother came to Dublin to make the acquaintance of their future daughter-in-law, saying: Our son will have ten thousand pounds, but the woman he marries must bring as much. Even when added together, her share of the money from her aunt's fortune and her own money did not

amount to ten thousand pounds. Priscilla had offered to give up her share, but she would have to live somewhere, and James would not consent to live with his sister-in-law. Priscilla was willing to sacrifice herself, to give up her money and live in the same house as James (whom she had never liked) for the sake of her sister's happiness. Emily, too, though she had begun to think of James Mease differently, was willing to sacrifice herself for the same reasons as moved Priscilla; and she tried to persuade him that Priscilla would never divide them, that they would be happier together than separated, that he did not know Priscilla, or understand her, but would learn to.

She remembered the long wrangle between herself and James, up and down and along and across Stephen's Green, through many streets, by the canal, and on its bridges while the boats passed through the locks. Everything was said that could be said, not once, but twenty, a hundred times. She had done all she could to persuade him, and had failed, saying often: But even if I wished to leave my sister, I couldn't, for she is giving up her money to satisfy your father and mother. She had clung to him till she almost hated him and was ashamed of herself. The wisest words she had uttered were on her own doorstep, when she said: I give you your liberty. He had taken her at her word, and the last news she had of him was the news of his marriage. That was her luck—that he had married and was out of her life for ever; for if he had not married and had come back to her saying: Now that your sister is gone we can marry, she would have hated him. And he was the kind of man who would have done this, unfeeling, lacking in perception, unaware always that he had divided them for a time, and was seeking to divide them for ever. He had done that, for he was the cause of Priscilla's death. Once it was known that her engagement with James Mease was

broken off, they had had to go away somewhere, and where could they go to live down the scandal better than to their own lodge in the glen under Croagh Patrick? It was there, during the winter, that Priscilla caught the cold that preceded her cough. What is a cold and a cough? Emily asked herself. Nothing in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases. But there was blood-spitting with Priscilla's cough, and this had brought them to Dublin, to their friend Sir Stanley Forbes, who advised them to winter in the South.

She had not the courage to think it all out again. Of what avail was this thinking? If she could only hush her thoughts! But the mind refuses to be hushed, and a new thought suddenly presented itself, that perhaps it was Priscilla's wish that she should remain in Smith's Buildings, lest the dead might be forgotten. The dead are never really dead, Emily said, until we cease to think of them. I should always be thinking of her, wherever I was. But if she wills it . . . And sitting on the little rep sofa, her eyes brimming with occasional tears, she bethought herself of the life that awaited her without Priscilla, alone in the world, without parents or relations. Aunt Clara was gone; a few distant cousins there were, dispersed over the world; a few neighbours, a few friends, scattered through Dublin; but nobody whom she could love. Lonely evenings, she said, the words provoked by the sight of the books in the bookcase, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, the Brontës, Anthony Trollope, Mrs. Henry Wood, and Charlotte Yonge. All these she and Priscilla had read together on either side of the fireplace. They had been reading *Lord Oakburn's Daughters* and were but half-way through the story; it would remain unread now, for she would not care to finish it since she could not share it with Priscilla. And she began to think of that strange death that none had

foreseen. Sir Stanley was disappointed that the winter in the South had not shown a greater improvement in Priscilla's health; she was thin, and white like a magnolia, his very words. But he did not anticipate that death was so near. I know he didn't, she said, speaking aloud. I know he didn't, she repeated, rising from the sofa, as if to give emphasis to her belief that the doctor had not suspected death to be so near.

After wandering around the faded room aimlessly, the doctor's study, by the spell of contrast, appeared to her, and she saw the old man, with his short, clipped beard, sitting in his Chippendale chair on the left of the carved Italian fireplace, all the carved tops of the bookcases, the infoliated mirrors with their perching birds, the inlaid tables, the bronzes and the vases. Was the rest of her life to be spent in collecting furniture and china? she asked herself; and returning to the sofa she began to listen, in her imagination, to the doctor, hearing him tell her that he did not despair of Priscilla's ultimate recovery if she avoided living within doors as far as possible. Tuberculosis, he said, is contracted in byres and houses, never in the open air; and since you have a garden where you can sleep in hammocks every night it is not raining, I don't see that you can do any better than to remain in Dublin. In the autumn you will go South again, where you will spend, I hope, as much of your time as possible in the open air. These were his very words. But despite all her care, Priscilla's health did not improve, remaining about the same.

Emily's thoughts concentrated on a few yards beyond the gates of Smith's Buildings, for half-way between these gates and the doctor's house last Friday she had met Esther Nunan coming from number four. Your maid told me that you were out, Esther said, and when I asked if Priscilla was at home, I learnt she had just

come in from the garden and had gone up to her room to lie down, feeling rather poorly. Emily remembered repeating the words: Feeling rather poorly, and then turning suddenly, she said: I think I'll go for the doctor and bring him home with me. He spoke of a bad sore throat, and wrote a prescription for a gargle; but Priscilla could not gargle, her throat being too swollen. She drank a little milk that evening, and during the night her breathing became more and more difficult. And all next day she struggled, dying towards evening, Sir Stanley's opinion being that the consumption from which she was suffering had flown to her throat and choked her. An ulceration of the larynx was the only explanation he could give of Priscilla's sudden death.

Emily buried her face in the cushions to shut out the sight of Priscilla's struggles for breath; she could not endure the memory of them, and it was not until she had exhausted her tears that she remembered a fact forgotten till now, that Priscilla had died struggling for speech. She had died with something on her mind; and Emily bethought herself of the paper and pencil that Priscilla had signed to her for. She had given her both, and waited anxiously, but Priscilla was not able to write; her hand fell away, and Emily read in her eyes: I cannot speak, I cannot write. It now seemed to her that she had only read Priscilla's eyes superficially. In her remembrance of them they seemed to say: I would give all the world to tell you, but I cannot.

Now what could Priscilla have had to tell me? she asked herself, forgetful of her grief for the moment. We had no secrets from each other, and yet Priscilla died with something upon her mind, something that she had not told me, something that she desired above all things to confide to me. What could it be? They had never been separated; only at Aix had they ever occupied

different rooms. And her thoughts passing out of Dublin back to Aix-les-Bains, to the day they arrived there, to the moment when the carriage stopped in front of the boarding-house, Emily remembered saying *Vous avez une chambre à coucher?* But when it came to saying: Can we have a double-bedded room? she began to stammer: *Nous voulons un lit doublé*, at which the proprietress's face changed expression. We haven't any double-bedded rooms, she answered, but you can have two small rooms for the same price on the same floor. The thought of different rooms had frightened her, and they were about to tell the porter to replace their luggage in the carriage, when the proprietress warned them that they would find it very hard to get a double-bedded room in any of the hotels. It being the height of the season, she said, you may not be able to get a room at all. And have to sleep in the streets, Emily whispered to Priscilla, forgetful that the proprietress spoke English. The nights are very cold, the proprietress answered, and the thought of the danger that a cold night might be to Priscilla compelled her to accept the two rooms, which, after all, were in the same corridor. I will come and unlace your dress for you, and call you in the morning, Priscilla, so after all it won't matter much. You won't be frightened, dear, and will not forget to lock your door?

The proprietress had promised that as soon as a double-bedded room was vacant, they should have it, but nobody left for weeks, and the room that was offered to them at last didn't seem to please Priscilla. It wasn't a very good room, it is true, but she wouldn't have minded sharing it with Priscilla, and perhaps Priscilla wouldn't have minded sharing it with her, but—— It may have been only a fancy, but she fancied that Priscilla had come to like a room to herself; or perhaps Priscilla thought that it would be safer for them to occupy different rooms; she

might have heard of the danger, or had an instinct of it. Be this as it may, Priscilla never forgot to lock her door, except once, and she was about to reprove Priscilla for her carelessness, the words were on her lips, but were stayed by the sight of Priscilla's embarrassment at the sudden intrusion. It had seemed to her that something was thrust under the pillow; she was about to ask Priscilla what she was hiding, and she wished now that she had asked her, for if she had things might have turned out differently. But the fact that Priscilla should hide anything from her had hurt her so deeply that she asked no questions, and after unlacing Priscilla's dress left the room abruptly.

This was the first and only misunderstanding that had ever occurred between them; and it must be something relating to that evening, perhaps it was about the book or letter, whatever she had thrust under the sofa pillow, that Priscilla wished to tell her. But no; for she had written on a piece of paper: In the garden, or words that read like: In the garden. What connection could the garden of Smith's Buildings have with Aix-les-Bains? It was sad, it was heartbreaking, that Priscilla should have had a secret from her, but it was worse that she should have died unable to tell it. At the memory of Priscilla's hand dropping away from the paper, unable to write, tears rose to Emily's eyes, and she began to think it was her duty to start for Aix to enquire the matter out at the hotel. But what could the proprietress tell her? The key to Priscilla's secret was not in Aix but in the words she had written: In the garden. One word more would have been enough, and that word was withheld from her, and she stood thinking, wondering, not whether she would ever be happy again, but if she would be less unhappy than she was to-day.

Her friends were not unmindful; all were anxious to

gone were unavailing. Emily acquiesced in their proposals for drives, but her thoughts were far away, and once when the friend sitting beside her asked what was the matter, she answered: The matter is that Priscilla is dead. And during the summer months, alone in Dublin, she indulged her grief till grief became a companion, a friend, which she clung to desperately, dreading its decline or death, feeling that her grief was all that remained to her now of Priscilla, asking herself often what she would be without it, answering that she would hate herself, all self-respect would be taken from her. But in grief, as in all human things, there is a grain of insincerity. Who can say for certain that he is sincere, who can say for certain that he believes? In the midst of our deepest emotions we are acting a comedy with ourselves; within us one self is always mocking another self. And it came to pass that Emily did not dare to recall Priscilla trying to write something on a piece of paper which she wished to communicate to her, for to recall that moment would be to seek tears, and sought tears are contemptible; and Emily was ashamed and looked upon herself as a hypocrite.

But grief, like everything else, changes, and Emily very soon began to notice that her grief was no longer the same as it was when tears and sobs were frequent. Her grief became, as it were, more spiritual, and it often fell out that while she was working in the garden Priscilla returned to her, in her thought, of course, but it seemed to her that she often saw her sister passing across the sward from the potting shed, and so clearly that she could not do else than leave the bed she was weeding. But not many steps were taken before the dear phantom vanished; and the pain that these visitations caused her was so like physical pain that she clasped her heart with

her hand. In the evening, as she sat reading in the old faded room, she often saw her lost sister, not when she looked up, expecting to see her, but when her thoughts were away from her. It was then that Priscilla crossed the room, looking back as if to assure herself that her sister was there. If Emily called her sister's name, if she rose from her seat, the appearance vanished, but as long as she looked steadily she saw Priscilla, not wan and shadowy as a ghost, but plainly, as in the flesh.

At times it seemed to her that her sister returned to ask her help, but could not speak her wish. The Priscilla that she saw come out of the back drawing-room was the Priscilla who had tried to write on the piece of paper, but could write only three words: In the garden. Emily longed to help her sister, but she was powerless, and it was her powerlessness to help that detained her in Dublin, for she could never quell the thought that Priscilla's secret would be revealed to her one day. How and when, she knew not, so she had perforce to deny herself to her friends, who were leaving Dublin for the summer months. Mountain and river scenery were proposed to her in vain, and if her resolution to wait for a sign wavered, as it sometimes did, the words: In the garden, repeated themselves in her mind. And under their sway one day she left the house and descended the steps into the garden, and looked round, thinking that the secret was about to be revealed to her.

But she heard no voice and saw no phantom in the lilac alley, where she expected to meet one, and the days and the weeks and even years went by, till one day a sudden shower of rain drove her for shelter to the potting shed ; and while waiting there, amidst the dust and cobwebs, hearing the rain patter on the large, heart-shaped leaves of the lilac, she noticed that one of the few planks piled against the wall of the shed had fallen

awry, and that behind it was something that looked like a book. She moved the plank a little to one side, and found a French book and a dictionary. Left here by Priscilla, she said to herself. At the same moment the words *In the garden*, came into her mind, and she stood tremulous, thinking of Priscilla retiring in secret to the potting shed to read this book. But why were her last thoughts about it? Emily asked herself, as she turned the book over, a thick one, closely printed. That the book contained something of importance to Priscilla and to herself she had no doubt, and the rain having ceased she went towards the house and began to read, continuing to read till supper time, the book dropping upon her knees from time to time. To think that it had come to pass that such a one as Priscilla had read this book, and with a dictionary! For the subject of it was a woman who was unfaithful to her husband with two different men, written in a French that must have puzzled Priscilla, so elaborate and careful was it. It often sent Emily to the dictionary, and she knew more French than her sister (Priscilla had never been able to master the verbs at school, and at Aix she had never tried to improve herself by talking or reading, whereas Emily had grappled with French speech at the table d'hôte, and all the books she read were French). The name of the Aix bookseller was upon the dictionary, and during supper Emily thought of the purchase of the dictionary, saying to herself as she went upstairs to the drawing-room: It was the dictionary or the book that Priscilla hid under the sofa pillar the night she forgot to lock her door and I entered unexpectedly. On this remembrance she threw herself into an armchair and continued her reading of Priscilla's book, and it was not long before she came to a passage that caused it to drop upon her knees once again.

For in the chapter she had just read it was related

how the heroine's bedchamber was in a distant wing of the house, only one other bedchamber being near it, and that as the heroine passed she knocked at the door of the spare room; and while waiting for her lover, began her preparations for the night before a toilet table covered with cut-glass bottles. And before this table, the lady, garbed in the finest muslin, sat combing her hair with tortoiseshell combs and brushing it with ivory brushes for the admiration of her lover, who sat watching, flattered that his lady should deem him worthy of so much thought and expensive care.

Again Emily paused in her reading to ponder on the woman represented in the book, and to remember the words of a man she had heard discourse at the table d'hôte at Aix. The subject of his discourse was that men and women were made of the same stuff in all ages, the stuff coming into the world the same, to be immediately modified by circumstance; and in proof of his theory, he told that France had produced in the sixteenth century the most beautiful poetry that the world had ever known, reciting some short poems which had seemed very beautiful to her so far as she could judge. Yet poetry, the man said, had left France like a migrating bird, not to return again for more than two hundred years. If men, he continued, were able to lose the poetic sense for two hundred years, might we not infer that they might lose their moral sense, to return to it later, and to lose it again? And now, making application of what she had heard at Aix to the woman in the book, Emily sat thinking that though men and women might be immoral in France, they might be moral in Ireland. It seemed to her hard to believe that a woman had ever lived in Ireland so licentious as the woman in the book, even during the Protestant ascendancy. It was impossible to believe that Aunt Clara, for instance, or Aunt Margaret, or Aunt

Jane, had ever conducted themselves as the woman in the book did, or would have found pleasure in reading this book that Priscilla had brought home from France.

Emily sat thinking, almost forgetful of the people in the fiction, admitting, however, to herself that the book was written in a style that beguiled the reader, one which she could appreciate. She would have liked to read on for the sake of the style, but Priscilla had never read for style. She was not interested in literature for its own sake, and the questions that Priscilla had put to her about married life, asking why James would not consent to live with them both, left no doubt in her mind that Priscilla was altogether ignorant of the relations between men and women. It was therefore extraordinary that such a book as this should have come into Priscilla's hands, and that she should have taken enough pleasure in the reading of it to buy a dictionary. She was dying, it is true, and knew that she was dying, and no doubt felt death to be near her, almost impending. Might she not therefore have availed herself of the chance that had put this book into her hands to learn before she died something of the world she was about to leave? A morbid desire, no doubt, hardly legitimate, but comprehensible. She might have felt, Emily continued, that she had never looked on the true face of life, but on a mask, and that of the true face she could only catch a glimpse in a book. It would have been better, perhaps, if the book had not come into her hands, for what did it profit her to learn what the world was? Better that she should have gone out of it thinking it pure, good, and kind—much better.

But how did the book come into Priscilla's hands? Did a man give it to her? But Priscilla was intimate with no man; she hardly answered when spoken to at the table d'hôte. The mystery seemed to grow denser.

The book must have been given to her, Emily continued, or she must have found it. But where could she find it? In her bedroom—there was nowhere else. And then——?

Emily struggled to carry the story on, but she could not move it a step further, till one day there came a great rush of thought. Some previous occupant of Priscilla's room at Aix might have forgotten the book; it might have been left in a wardrobe or chest of drawers. But the housemaids could not have overlooked it. Another rush of thought! The book may have dropped behind the chest of drawers and was caught between it and the wall, and when Priscilla moved the chest of drawers the book fell. This conjecture seemed more in character with what she knew of Priscilla than any other. But much remained to be accounted for, and she could not think how it was that Priscilla had brought back to England a book that did not belong to her. Several days passed in vain conjectures, and she remembered at last that having found the book Priscilla could not take it downstairs to the office and say: A previous occupant left this book in my room. The proprietress would open it, and would at once suspect that Priscilla had read it; nor could Priscilla leave the book where she had found it, for when the room was next turned out the story would begin to run that the quiet English girl, as demure as an image, read improper books in her bedroom. A moment after, Emily discovered another link. Priscilla could not burn the book, for there were no fires; she was ashamed to confess to her sister that she had seen the book, and thinking that she could get rid of it in Ireland she had slipped it into her placket and travelled over with it, to her great inconvenience. Her thought might have been to bury it in the garden when she had finished reading it. But she had never finished it, and Emily was glad that Priscilla

was spared the end. She had read enough, however, to know that the book was a disgrace.

And it was to burn that book that her spirit has kept me here, Emily said, raising her eyes to the clock, which was striking twelve, two hours after her usual bedtime. Yet she could not go to bed before she had accomplished some of her duty to Priscilla, and she sat up till one, tearing paper from the book and watching the text disappear into black ashes. But a book is not burnt quickly, and she had to take a large remnant of it to her room, for she did not dare leave it torn for the servants to look into, since they might suspect something, though it was in French. Nowhere would it be safe except under her pillow; and if she were to die that night and be found dead with it under her pillow!

But death did not come to take her that night, and the next evening what remained of the book perished in the grate, and as the last page curled and blackened, she began to apprehend all that the burning of the book meant to her. Now that it was gone she was free to leave this dusty old house and the dusty conventions in which half her life had been spent. She was free to return to Aix and to live like other English spinsters on a small income, travelling whither she listed, from one boarding-house to another, seeking—— Does anybody do more than to seek and to find, mayhap, something? Does any woman find even the shadow of her dream at thirty-five? she asked. Her thoughts began to doze again, and whilst she dozed the day returned to the garden and the blackbird whistled again in the dusk. But would she be able to match that bird's song again? Once, ah, once; and between waking and dream she rose to her feet and went upstairs, forgetful of all things but her bed.

HUGH MONFERT

I

DR. KNIGHT will save me from Minor Orders, thought Hugh Monfert as he stood shaving before a small mirror in a white-washed, cell-like room, a young man of two-and-twenty, tall, thick-set, round-headed, and short-necked, whose curved nose hung flag-like over a long, loose mouth when he tightened his upper lip and drew the razor across it. I must have a priest's advice and none can advise me better than Dr. Knight. How odd that I didn't think of him last night. He dipped his shaving brush into the jug of hot water and was about to start a second shaving, but before lathering again he stopped so that he might better think out the letter he was minded to send, anon laying the razor down to consider what answer he would give to his mother if she were to ask him why he had thought of inviting the President to Wotton Hall, for he had never expressed a wish to do so before and it was three years since he had left Stanislaus College. Of course he had a right to invite whom he pleased to his own house, but his plans would come to naught if his mother suspected that the priest was asked to Wotton Hall to mediate. But why should she refuse Dr. Knight's mediation if I am willing to accept it? We cannot go on wrangling for ever about an heir. An heir is the bee in her bonnet, he growled. Every woman who comes here is considered by her as a possible wife and mother, and it's getting upon my nerves; it's driving me out of my wits. And once more forgetful of his shaving

he stood like a stock, his face a blank, asking himself why his mother could not wait, allowing things to take their course. He was not averse from marriage but he would like to be allowed to marry when and whom he pleased, for his pleasure and not for the sake of an heir. Surely this is reasonable? he asked, for after all I am but two-and-twenty. The human mind is a very strange thing, he reflected; ideas drop into it, and we do not know how or whence they come. His face became still more overcast, and he sought the cause of his mother's anxiety to see him married—Married to anybody, for it is not my happiness she seeks but her own ends.

He had always looked upon his mother as the most unselfish of women, and to find her one of the most selfish frightened him; and his thoughts passing on he was drawn to seek excuses for her willingness to sacrifice his happiness. She is some years over fifty, and if she is to enjoy her grandchildren no time must be lost; that is her point of view, and she is so absorbed in her dream of grandchildren that she forgets me. He laughed aloud and repeated her words: You are the last. Her passion for grandchildren could be nothing else than it is, he added, for she married that the family might linger on for another couple of hundred years, having no thought for the fact that everything ends sooner or later, even the glorious name of Montferrat. And his thoughts deviating a little, he remembered her father, Joe Huxtable, a peasant who had amassed great wealth in the corn trade and who had had the wit to see that when the corn laws were abolished the next fortunes to be made would come from under the earth. He had gone to the north to make another fortune out of coal, and continued to pile up money till homesickness brought him back to his native County, Essex. If God had given him a son it might have been otherwise, but having given him only one daughter it was

but natural that he should, when he was alone and depressed, fall to thinking of some Earl or Lord or Marquess as his daughter's husband, and if none of these were to be gotten, of some great family that would accept Betty, she being no wise an ill-looking young woman and of a great fortune, enough to pay the debts of an encumbered estate. . . . Such thoughts as these must have come to his grandfather, Joe Huxtable, and there being an almost extinct family at his door, the Monferts of Wotton Hall, now represented by an old man of sixty, living in four or five rooms of the great mansion on what his creditors would allow him, the thought must have come into Joe Huxtable's mind: There's many things to be said against this marriage, as there is against all marriages, but there's many things to be said for it, too. And Hugh, who still retained a faint memory of his grandfather, could easily imagine the old man saying: It is fitting that the youngest family in England should come to the help of the oldest. But the Huxtables were Protestants, and the Monferts, though an improvident lot in the eighteenth century, had always kept themselves aloof from Protestants. Even his father, Hugh thought, Edward Monfert, in his decadence, with bailiffs oftener in his house than out of it and some illegitimate children in the village, would not have dared to break the family tradition by marrying a Protestant—he was certain of that. All the same, he was glad the circumstance had not arisen. His mother had not married for love, but for admiration of the ancestry his father represented; her wish was, and it was her father's wish too, that the Huxtable should come to the help of the Monfert, and when a child he had heard his mother say, in speaking of her conversion, that she would never have felt herself to be a Monfert if she had not been received into the Roman Catholic Church. Was it the desire to raise herself socially? It may have been

that. The romantic story of Hugues de Montferrat appealed to her imagination; she had said something herself that led him to think so. But he might be mistaken, and he began to consider his mother's marriage from another point of view; that feeling herself drawn to the true Church she had perhaps wedded his father as much for his religious faith as for his ancestry. It is always wrong, he continued in his thought, to attribute motives, for we can never know the true ones, only God can know them; and to atone for the thought that had come into his mind unasked, he dwelt on his mother's devotion to the Church of her adoption and upon her wise administration of his estates—how she lived during the long years of his minority upon a mere pittance in three or four rooms of the Hall with two maidservants, who had brought her husband a hundred thousand pounds on her marriage and another hundred and fifty thousand at her father's death. All this money she had applied to the redemption of the estates from debts, hoarding year in year out so that when he came of age he might have a large sum of money for the rebuilding of Wotton Hall; her whim this was, no doubt, and her pleasure; it could not be else than that she had enjoyed living in poverty, for her poverty reminded her all the while that her life was following its predestined course—not lessening her merit thereby, he'd be sorry to think that; and he remembered having heard her speak of the rebuilding of Wotton Hall as his lot, when they walked together in the avenue three years after her husband's death, when he was a child of six.

In those early years, till he went to Stanislaus College, they had walked together in the avenue every day between lesson time and luncheon; and the image of himself and his mother leading their lonely life together rose up in his thoughts clear and distinct. He could still hear her voice if he listened for it, telling him that she

was saving money every year so that his estates might be free from mortgages, and he have a big sum of money in hand for the rebuilding of the Hall, his lot; for his father had had no thought for his great ancestry, not even for Hugues de Montferrat, who came over with the Conqueror and lived in a castle defended by moat and draw-bridge. He could hear his childish voice pleading for seven towers and a portcullis when the house was rebuilt, and then the scene flitted from the long reach of avenue to the morning-room, where his mother taught him his lessons and where they sat in the evening in two big armchairs in front of the fire. He was then old enough to follow a story read from a book, but he liked to hear her tell stories better than to hear her read them: Mother, what you are reading to me is not nearly so funny as what happened to Hugues de Montferrat's grandsons, who followed Richard Coeur de Lion. Tell me again the story of the minstrel who discovered the King's prison. But I have told you the story, Hugh; you know it by this time as well as I do. No, mother, I don't remember how the King escaped from prison, and I don't think you ever told it to me, not properly. Her cry often echoed in his thoughts: Hugh, you should have been in bed hours ago! Come, let me put you to bed at once. Again the scene flitted—from his bedside, with himself repeating a Hail Mary after his mother, to Stanislaus College, not to the first but to the last years he spent there, when his mind was set upon Oxford, to the day when his mother wrote telling him that he must forgo Oxford and return to Wotton Hall, the builder having told her that the chimney stacks were not safe and that a winter storm might overthrow one of them; if that happened it would not stop falling until it reached the bottom. He had had to give up Oxford, and he and his mother had spent fifteen thousand pounds rebuilding Wotton Hall. And

the end of it all was that they might have to separate, leaving the house to fall into ruins after all the money had been spent upon it, for his mother could not live in the Hall alone; and he stood, razor in hand, appalled by the calamity. Mother would never forgive me, and he thought of her kind but unyielding nature, and how the calamity that faced them could be averted by Dr. Knight, who might be able to persuade her that if she and her son were to continue to live together, she must remember his rights, for he had rights in Wotton Hall, which was big enough to hold their different selves. If, he cried, there is give and take. I must be allowed to live my own life in Wotton Hall as I please; there can be no going back on that. And what I ask is so little—merely to marry when and whom I please. All I ask (and again he began to shave himself) is not to be reminded that I am the last and that if I do not produce an heir the rebuilding of Wotton Hall will have been but a vanity. She can have her friends down for week-ends; I will meet them at meals and be agreeable and rattle out all the small talk that she loves, but after meals I think I should be allowed to retire to the Barn, the only part of the house I ask for. She has and can continue to have all the rest for herself, friends, and sundry. I make no objection to the week-enders, but I do not want them to be brought up here to see my collection of armour, my statues, my pictures, and to ask stupid questions; and to be told by my mother if I don't answer them or give evasive replies, that I am rude and unworthy of my ancestry.

A sudden sense of the humour of this quarrel obliged him to stop shaving, and whilst thinking of the conditions that Dr. Knight must lay down, the inviolability of the Barn being one of them, he recalled that the first time he had summoned courage to withstand his mother outright was the day that he and she had climbed to the third

storey of Wotton Hall to consider if the rooms could be utilised as servants' quarters. He had followed the passage into which the garret rooms opened, finding himself at last in a great, unceilinged room, fifty or sixty feet of space by forty, which he instinctively named the Barn. He had called to his mother, expecting her to share his admiration of the rafters. But, my dear Hugh, she said, you forget that all the maidservants' rooms will open on to the passage leading to this huge—what do you call it? The Barn, he answered. I don't think you would care for such promiscuity. But of course, mother, I should have the whole storey to myself. I shouldn't think of sitting here reading and drawing late at night if the other rooms were occupied by maidservants. Then you'll have to put your hand into your pocket, Hugh, and build new servants' quarters. . . . That was how he was treated in Wotton Hall; and he stood thinking whether it would be advisable to tell his mother that he was going to write to Dr. Knight. To tell her that I am going to write to him, he said, stopping on the staircase, is unnecessary, for it is ten chances to one he'll answer that his duties keep him in Staffordshire for the present, but that later, during the summer vacation, he will be glad to spend a few days with us—something of that sort.

II

On coming down to breakfast a few days later he found a letter from Dr. Knight on his plate.

MY DEAR HUGH,—Your letter reached me in the midst of my preparations to leave Stanislaus for a couple of weeks. I am going to France to fetch my daughter Beatrice home from school, and as you are within easy distance of London it seems a pity to pass so close by you and not avail myself of your kind invitation. You

mention that any day which is convenient to me will be convenient to you, so if I do not hear to the contrary you may expect me on the fifteenth. As you and my son Percy were at Stanislaus together (at different ends of the school, for you are Percy's senior by three or four years), I think it would interest you to know that Percy is thinking of taking Orders. I say thinking, for he shows so much devotion to the arts that he may find he has no vocation for the priesthood; yet the two are not incompatible, or used not to be. I have not forgotten that you too were devoted to the arts, especially during the last years you were with us; no doubt the arts still retain a place in your affection, and that is why I propose to bring Percy with me. His originality seems to me most striking, but you will be able to form your own opinion from the portfolio of drawings he is bringing.

—Very sincerely yours, RICHARD KNIGHT.

After reading the letter Hugh passed it over to his mother, saying: Dr. Knight is coming here to-day. Coming here to-day! she repeated, for this notification of a visitor seemed a little curt, and she was about to remark that he should have consulted her convenience before inviting Dr. Knight to Wotton Hall; but her thoughts did not pass into words, for she wished to avoid saying anything that might start another quarrel. The moment was an anxious one, and Hugh began to consider her stubbornness, represented, he thought, by her high shoulders, short neck, and thin, aquiline nose. Here is your letter, Hugh, she said; I have read it. Dr. Knight is a widower, I suppose, and became a priest after the death of his wife? Since he has a son and daughter it could not be otherwise, mother, Hugh answered, adopting a sneering tone which was not lost on Mrs. Monfert. You mean, sir, that whereas you had the advantage of being

born a Catholic, I had to become one; and picking up her key basket she drew her black shawl over her shoulders (since her husband's death she always wore black), and swept out of the room, Hugh thought somewhat dramatically. Now what have I done to annoy her? he said. Merit is got by renouncing error rather than by being born outside of error, and she should be proud of her conversion. He was about to ask himself again how much of her conversion was due to admiration of the family, when his secretary came into the room with a bundle of papers. Yes, I am with you, he cried, and followed Mr. Somerville Cootes up to the Barn, where he sat with him writing cheques and letters for the next two hours; and when these were done he accompanied the steward to the Home Farm to view some cattle that had come down from the north, afterwards returning to luncheon to find a telegram from Dr. Knight mentioning the train he was coming by. We had better send the luggage cart as well as the carriage to the station, Mrs. Monfert said, for he may have some heavy luggage. Hugh acquiesced, and returned to the Barn till he deemed the carriage to be on its way back from the station with Dr. Knight, when he joined his mother in the sunny avenue.

There is a smack of autumn in the air, he said, although not a leaf has fallen. The pathetic, eerie little chitter of the robin seemed to them in keeping with the crisp, dry air, with the languid beauty of the distant fields showing through the elms over against the steep descent into a narrow valley in which cattle were grazing. Hawthorns and cattle go well together, Hugh said, and when his mother spoke of deer he answered that deer seemed to him pretentious and silly. And wondering if he were right, or if the remark was no more than another example of his constant capriciousness, she for-

got his unwillingness to marry in the compelling beauty of the glowing fields running in and out of woods, and hedgerows, with single trees carrying the eye on and on into subdued tints and airy distances to a high horizon on which the ruins of an ancient castle could be faintly discerned—an admiration that was, however, but momentary, her sense of the prospect being suddenly eclipsed by forebodings of the changes, even transformations, maybe, that would certainly overtake it if Hugh did not marry. She therefore relied upon Dr. Knight to put Hugh right regarding his manifest duties, mentioning by the way that marriage was the only safeguard; whilst Hugh was thinking that Dr. Knight would not fail him, but warn his mother against trying to influence him too much in his choice of a wife, incurring thereby a great responsibility. But she never shrinks from a responsibility, he said to himself, and had begun to wonder at her courage (which he did not envy, it being too alien from himself for envy), when her voice roused him from his meditations. I am afraid they must have missed the train; if they hadn't, they would be here by now. I dare say you are right, he replied, and the inadequacy of the answer puzzled her. But she refrained from putting questions and Hugh began to hope for the speedy arrival of the visitors, beguiled once more by the beauty of the prospect, which he would like Dr. Knight to see before the last lights were gone.

And thus divided in their projects, they proceeded into the avenue, stopping by the rhododendrons to hearken to the vague sounds that came through the twilight country, hearing at last amid many rumours, the wheels of a swiftly running carriage. It is not a tradesman's cart, Hugh said, I hear eight hooves; and they stood waiting till the sleek horses came into view, taking the high pitch in the road at a canter, the coachman checking them as usual. On catching sight of Mrs.

Monfert he drew them into an unwilling standstill, and out of the carriage stepped the tall, lean ecclesiastic whose quiet bearing and courtesy had attracted Hugh and made a permanent impression upon him years ago, when Dr. Knight was Vice-President of Stanislaus College. He was followed by his son, Percy, a youth of seventeen or eighteen, hollow-chested and pale, with large, eloquent eyes, and customary salutations having been made, Mrs. Monfert entered into talk with Percy, leaving Hugh to tell Dr. Knight that the clock tower and some fragments of the old Elizabethan house still remained, but that the greater part of Wotton Hall was Tudor and Jacobean. As they approached the house Hugh dropped the word *garth*, to which the priest answered: A word more common in my Yorkshire than in your Essex, meaning a low wall enclosing a space; and I suppose that you are right in your use of the word. I like your gateway, he continued, the pillars and the ironwork; the portico is excellent Jacobean. I am glad you like the house, Hugh replied; and now, sir, would you care to go to your room at once? The luggage cart has not yet arrived, and whilst waiting for it (if you are not too tired), we might sit for a while on the lawn. Dr. Knight replied that he would like to stretch his legs and to catch as many glimpses of Wotton Hall as possible before his departure. But, sir, you have only just arrived! You will stay a week at least, I hope. I could not think of letting you go before. It is very kind of you, Hugh, and there is nothing I would like better than to spend a week with you in the scent of these old cedars; but I think I mentioned in my letter that I was on my way to France to fetch my daughter, and I shall have to leave even sooner than I expected—to-morrow afternoon, in time to catch the Dover train. My dear Dr. Knight, this is a real disappointment. I have been

looking forward to having you here ever since I left Stanislaus but have not been able to do so before, for the last three years we have been engaged in rebuilding. You are speaking of the interior, Hugh? I see no traces of modern masonry. You are quite right, sir, with the exception of—but I am overcome by the news that you are going to leave us so soon. You said to-morrow morning, I think? To-morrow afternoon, the priest answered. But I shall return again, I hope. But I have need of your advice, sir. You will not think that I asked you here merely for that? Dr. Knight raised his hands apologetically, and Hugh continued: Indeed, I did not. For the last three years I have been thinking of your visit here, and the workmen have not left my house many months. But you know there are always two motives—— Not two motives, Hugh, Dr. Knight interrupted, smiling faintly; there is one motive and then circumstance precipitates us into action. You are right, sir, Hugh answered, and the priest waited several seconds and then said: You were saying that you needed my advice? and his voice was encouraging, reminding Hugh of the days when he knelt beside Dr. Knight absorbed in remembrances of his sins.

Well, sir, if you are going to leave us to-morrow, there will be hardly time to tell you my story. Is your story then a very long one? Dr. Knight asked, and Hugh, a little bewildered, answered: After you have heard it you will have to hear mother's before you can form an opinion. Is the difference that has arisen a very serious one? the prelate asked in a smooth, even, almost mellifluous voice. Very serious, Hugh replied, and then under the spur of necessity he said abruptly: I can tell you my story now, and to-morrow morning you will walk with my mother; she is sure to ask you. But if it should rain, Hugh? If it rains she will take you round the house,

and the portraits will lead you to talk of a number of things—my ancestry, and the rebuilding of the home, which was almost a ruin. She will speak about an heir, and if she doesn't you can, I think, sir, say a word or two that will start her talking about our differences. Oh, said Dr. Knight, I am beginning to understand. She would like you to marry? Yes, Hugh replied, that is the point which divides us. But are you averse from matrimony, Hugh? No, I don't think I am; but I do not wish it forced upon me. If the impulse comes to marry, well, let it come, and if not, I can't help it; and that is the very point I would like to explain to you before you speak to my mother, if you will be so kind as to speak to her. The worry is her failure to see that I am no longer a child but a young man of two-and-twenty come into man's estate. And my proposal to you, sir, is that you should—— Dr. Knight broke in suddenly to ask Hugh if he thought an intervention on his (Dr. Knight's) part would soothe matters, to which Hugh answered quickly that he saw no other way of avoiding an estrangement that might end by being permanent. For, Dr. Knight, things cannot go on as they are. I must be allowed to live my own life as it pleases me. My mother thinks much less of me than she does of the family. I think I understand, Dr. Knight answered pensively, and it was then Hugh's turn to assure him that he was not asked to Wotton Hall only to settle family differences. I have never forgotten, Hugh said, and never shall forget your kindness to me at Stanislaus College; for I was often very unhappy at Stanislaus. But we did not see very much of each other, Hugh. You used to come to confession, I remember. Yes, Hugh answered; but what seems very little to you meant a great deal to me, and the only times at Stanislaus that I remember with any pleasure were the few minutes when I knelt on the praying-stool

beside you. I don't wish to say anything against the other priests; they were all good men, no doubt, but— There is always, the priest said, an instinctive like and dislike in us, something that we cannot explain or account for. You were my one friend, Hugh continued, and that is why I wrote to ask you here, for the pleasure of seeing you as much as for the help that you may be able to give me, if you like to give it. But perhaps I am asking too much? I shall certainly be glad to hear your story, the priest answered, and it is surely not such a long one that it cannot be told between now and dinner-time. A story poured out all of a sudden carries little weight, said Hugh, but as you are going away to-morrow another opportunity might not occur.

I still think the intervention of a third person is dangerous, the priest replied, as Hugh opened a tall iron gate leading to the lawns. What a beautiful place you have, Hugh, he added, stopping to admire for a moment the calm woods and the evening sky. And then remembering that admiration of Hugh's house was out of keeping with the story he was about to hear, he said: As you say, my dear Hugh, another opportunity might not occur for some time, and I see a seat yonder where I shall be able to give all my attention to you. Where, Hugh answered, we shall be safer from interruption; and if my mother wearies of Percy's talk and comes to interrupt us, we can move away and find a seat under another cedar. I don't think that she will weary of Percy's talk, Dr. Knight replied. Nobody ever wearies of Percy. You told me, said Hugh, that he has brought some of his drawings to show me. I was much struck by what you wrote in your letter, a mere phrase: that in olden times the priesthood and the arts were not incompatible; and they spoke of Fra Angelico and Fra Bartholomeo till it began to seem to them that they were wasting time. You

will see Percy's drawings after dinner, the prelate interjected suavely; now you must tell me about yourself.

And Hugh began to relate what he had thought was a long and intricate story, but which, when he came to tell it, turned out to be not much more than a eulogy of the economy with which Mrs. Monfert had managed the estates during his minority, of his great debt to her, of his gratitude and appreciation of the sacrifices she had made. She saved money out of her jointure, he said, and invested it in Wotton Hall. At least a thousand pounds out of the fifteen thousand that the rebuilding cost us came out of her pocket. I would not have you think, sir, that I am ungrateful to her for all she has done, and I hope that when you talk together to-morrow you will lay stress upon this point. You will say that I am devoted to her, which is but the truth. Yet it may come to my having to leave Wotton Hall if she cannot be persuaded to forgo her exactions. She would exact, Dr. Knight said, a marriage from you so that you might produce an heir? That is it, Hugh replied, and the sympathy that he detected in the priest's voice went straight to his heart. If I do not go for a trip round the world, I shall have to take Orders. I should be sorry, Dr. Knight began,— To hear that I had taken Orders? Hugh interjected, and the prelate answered that he would be sorry to hear that anybody had entered the priesthood merely to escape from the troubles with which life is beset; and he adverted to the help that a man of Hugh's position, wealth, and ancient family could bring to the Church from the outside; especially, he added, in a Protestant country. It has always been my desire to help the Church to which my faith is plighted, and I shall think over all you say; and I hope that you will think, sir, of what I have said to you, especially regarding my appreciation of all that my

mother has done for me. In fact, if she had not done so much, I often think we should be happier and better able to live together. The priest did not answer, and at the end of a pause Hugh continued: I was brought up under her eyes, instructed by her, and I am no longer sure that a child should be given over to one person to mould like clay. But a mother must look after her child, Hugh, according to her lights. Even so, Hugh answered, the moulding should cease when the child has reached maturity. Don't you think so, sir? Dr. Knight pursed his lips and said: My dear Hugh, we are always being moulded; from birth to death we continue to take new shapes. That's just it, sir. We are always being moulded by Nature, by the character that God gives us. I have no aversion for marriage in principle, but would like, as I have said, to wait till the impulse comes to marry, not to marry for the sake of an heir. I would prefer to live my life quietly for the time being, leaving Nature to work out the destiny that is in me.

The discussion was about to take a theological turn, and Hugh was surprised that Dr. Knight did not warn him that to place ourselves unreservedly in the hands of Nature is to incur a great danger, Nature being beset with pitfalls. But the words that he anticipated: We want guidance, Hugh, and the Church is always ready to advise her children, were not spoken, and the conversation was brought to a pause suddenly by a little wind laden with the fragrance of a blossoming lime; and then another wind went by impregnated with the pungent odour of lavender, and looking whence the winds came they saw the shrubs in bloom in the narrow beds between the paved paths and the walls of the house. You should be very happy here, the priest said, but Hugh's heart was too full of his own trouble to give heed to the evening sounds; to the rooks returning through the overhanging

night, the old birds leading the young ones to their roosts, their soft cawing speaking of rest, of the weariness of the day ended at last. A vague sound came across the meadows, it might be the rumble of a passing cart. The peafowl gathered under the cedars. A bird would look at a shelving branch as if he had forgotten he could fly, and thought it too high for him to jump; and then the next branch seeming to him again too high, he settled himself for the effort and sprang, reaching his second perch without difficulty; and so on, till he had ensconced himself high up in the tree, followed by other peafowl, every one of which adopted the same leisurely manner of climbing, although they were flying birds and could have reached their favourite roost in one flight from the sward. And possessed by the same instinct, the swans with their grey brood climbed out of the ponds to hide themselves among the reeds. Wotton Hall, its woods and its lawns, are as beautiful as any that I have seen. You are a fortunate man, Hugh, and I quite understand that your mother should be anxious. But I understand your point of view, too. I will speak to her if she speaks to me on the subject, and if she does not I will lead her into speaking of it, and will tell her that in my opinion the choice must be left to you, that it is in the hands of God. They had reached the few steps that led to the stone terrace over against the lawns, but before entering the pillared saloon, they stood for a moment to gaze, watching the kine in the pastures beyond the artificial water, and a line of distant woods.

A beautiful sunset prospect, I admit it to be, Hugh said, but it is by no means striking by moonlight or starlight, and a miserable one at dawn.

III

Whilst listening to Percy talking to her about his vocation Mrs. Monfert remembered that Hugh had taken Dr. Knight away with him and might be telling him at that moment that his mother wished him to marry at once, to choose any one of the women who came down to spend week-ends at Wotton Hall, thereby enlisting Dr. Knight's sympathies against her; and she regretted that she had allowed the priest to go away with Hugh, leaving her with this tiresome boy, who did not know whether he was going to be a priest or an artist. But it was too late now to go out and find them on the lawn and interrupt their talk; she must bear with this boy and wait until to-morrow to have her talk with Dr. Knight, for during the evening Hugh would like to see Percy's drawings. At last she formed a plan to send them both to the Barn, for Percy would like to see the armour and the books, and in their absence she would be able to pick out from Dr. Knight what Hugh had said to him on the lawn. But after dinner Percy brought down his drawings; Hugh must have his mother consider them, and when the last drawing was returned to the portfolio Dr. Knight fell to talking of his daughter Beatrice, saying that she was a perfect match of Percy in appearance and in temperament, both being drawn equally to the arts and religion. To Mrs. Monfert's question whether Beatrice contemplated remaining in the convent, taking vows, of course, Dr. Knight answered that he would not venture to give an opinion upon such a point before seeing Beatrice; and when all that could be said about her had been said he asked if he might retire to his room, saying that he felt tired after his journey. And Mrs. Monfert retired to hers, seeking a speck of comfort and finding one; the deference with which Hugh listened to

the President of Stanislaus College encouraged her to believe that if she could convince Dr. Knight that marriage was the only safeguard in certain cases (she need not speak of her husband—it would be enough to say that though some young men might not like ladies they might like common women), the priest's knowledge of the world would enable him to understand her point of view; and if he chose to exercise his influence Hugh might be persuaded, if not into an immediate marriage, at least to look upon marriage as his duty. And so convincing did the story that she had prepared seem to her that she slept quietly that night, and came down next morning to breakfast with all her plans for a conference ready in her head.

As soon as the meal was over she asked Hugh to show the Barn to Percy, who no doubt would like to see his collection of armour, and then turning to Dr. Knight she asked if he would like to see the garden, the farm, and the stables. When the horses that the grooms were bidden to unsheet were admired, they repaired to the garden, and the gardener called attention to carnations as big as small cauliflowers and to the grapes overhead. But Dr. Knight said he only liked little flowers, a remark that Mrs. Monfert thought savoured of Hugh, and the gardener visibly demurred when the priest said that hot-house grapes were but a poor substitute for grapes grown in the open air, and that the almost skinless, sweet, white grapes of Fontainebleau were the best. Mrs. Monfert liked the thick-skinned, gluey, hot-house grapes of England, and after this first exchange of differences of opinion they walked round the fields through woods till they came to the farm. The byres seemed to interest Dr. Knight more than the stables or the garden, and Mrs. Monfert wearied a little of his talk with Crogby about swine and yoes and rams, and perceiving that he was

putting her past her patience he explained that Stanislaus had a farm and that he was glad of a chance to put to the test some of the stories his bailiff had told him. Mrs. Monfert answered that she too was glad to hear Crogby talk his trade. He comes from your country, somewhere north of the Tweed, she said. Dr. Knight was from Yorkshire, but he let the remark go by without comment and listened to Mrs. Monfert's praise of her bailiff, who had just returned from the north with cattle—Which we are fattening for the home market.

The priest asked many questions and Mrs. Monfert was glad to answer them, for she wished to create an atmosphere of sympathy and to dispel the memory of the mistake she had made in pledging her faith to hot-house grapes rather than to those Dr. Knight preferred. It was necessary for her to do this, for the priest had already spoken of the heat of the day, saying that a bright September sun blazing in a cloudless sky was harder to bear than any July or August one, for the world was not then baked. You must have had very little rain here, he said, for the fields are like cast-iron; these clods make walking difficult. We shall soon be under trees, Mrs. Monfert answered, and they climbed a steep stubble field, keeping within the shade of the high hedges, and by many paths and stiles finding their way at last through a gate into an oak wood where there was shade in plenty under the great bronze leaves, but the wood was so thick that they had to follow a broad path open to the sun. In winter the rain collects in these ruts, forming deep puddles, said Mrs. Monfert; the walking is hard till the shooting season, but at least one walks dry shod. Dr. Knight had tried the middle of the road and both sides, but everywhere the ruts were baked, and he walked painfully, thinking that he would prefer

to get his feet wet rather than to have them hurt. The shooters are posted in these rides, Mrs. Monfert continued. Hugh goes out with them, but he seldom carries a gun now. A cock pheasant rising out of the scrub flew down the hillside with a great crowing and a whirl of wings, and anon their voices disturbed a bird who went away chattering. The wood seems full of game, Dr. Knight said, for it seemed to him a suitable remark to make, and their talk turned to the breeding of pheasants. The keeper's house is higher up the hillside, she said, and now that I come to think of it I am sorry that we did not pass that way. You would like to have seen his cottage and the dogs, but it is too far to return. Dr. Knight acquiesced and asked her if the chattering bird they had just seen flying through the wood was a hen pheasant, and she answered no, that it was a yaffle. And the word not being familiar to the priest, she added: The large woodpecker is known in these parts as the yaffle.

At that moment the long red body of a fox crossed the ride some fifty or sixty yards ahead of them, and they began to talk of the hunting season, Mrs. Monfert telling that Hugh cared more for hunting than shooting, and that the hunting in Essex was not what it was in the Shires. Dr. Knight answered her with talk about certain packs of hounds in the north of England, the conversation getting no nearer the subject they had come out to talk about, till at last Mrs. Monfert could bear it no longer and said at the end of a pause: I wonder into whose hands this beautiful place will fall; and anxious to avail himself of the opportunity, Dr. Knight murmured that it could pass into no other hands but Hugh's. I am thinking of who will come after him. You see, he is the last, and if he doesn't marry the family dies with him. The priest answered, that in due course Hugh would take to himself a wife, to which polite hope Mrs. Mon-

fert replied that Hugh did not show himself more prone to matrimony than his father, who did not marry until he was sixty. And if he delays so long I shall not see my grandchildren growing up. But there is no reason to fear that he will delay unduly, Mrs. Monfert. It may be as you say, and I trust it will. He is but two-and-twenty, the priest said. But at two-and-twenty a man should know his own mind, she answered quickly. Your son Percy is only seventeen and he already knows that he is called to the priesthood. What I am afraid of, Dr. Knight, is—but of the dead let us speak nothing but good and I certainly will never speak evil of my husband, who was a good husband to me as long as he lived. I have got no complaint; I married him with my eyes open, knowing that he had had mistresses, unfortunately girls from the village; it would have been better if he had gone further afield. Dr. Knight, what keeps me awake at night is that Hugh may follow his father's footsteps. An early marriage is a great safeguard. I know Hugh very well, the priest answered, and I think have some insight into his character, having spent several years with him at Stanislaus (Mrs. Monfert knew that Dr. Knight was her son's confessor and waited eagerly for the next words), and unless I am altogether mistaken I don't think that you have any need to fear that he will contract any of the highly reprehensible relations to which you allude. I am glad to hear you say so, Mrs. Monfert answered, and I take some credit to myself, for I did not fail to bring him up religiously, keeping the fear of hell always before him, instilling the belief as well as I could that any mortal sin deserved eternal punishment, that God is revengeful. God is merciful, the priest interposed. Merciful, yes, Mrs. Monfert returned, and embarrassed by the theological question they walked a little way in silence, Mrs. Monfert saying at

the end of a pause: True, quite true, God is merciful. But you have never noticed anything in Hugh's conduct that leads you to suspect, to fear that—— Oh, nothing, nothing, she answered. I should be sorry to see Hugh fall into sin, to do any girl a wrong, but young men sin and repent and I often ask myself if—— Feeling that Mrs. Monfert was about to say that she would sooner Hugh sinned and repented than that he should remain a chaste man, the prelate coughed, thereby saving her from the end of her sentence, if the end of it included the dubious morality that Dr. Knight suspected. Then you have no advice to offer me? You think we can do nothing? We can do nothing, Mrs. Monfert, to persuade Hugh to marry against his will. We can lead where we cannot drive—— I see he has been talking to you and won you over to his side. He complained, the priest answered in a tone of reproof: Perhaps I should say he expressed a regret that you were so anxious—— To see him married! Mrs. Monfert interjected. But every mother wants to see her son married, especially if he is heir to a great estate and if he be the last. Priests do not take sides, Mrs. Monfert. I know that, Dr. Knight, and you must forgive me if I spoke hastily, in a moment of alarm. You don't know (he cannot have told you, for he doesn't know himself) that all my life is at stake. It will be either success or failure, and very soon, for if he doesn't marry within a few years he will take after his father. You know him well, it is true, but I am his mother and in some ways a mother knows her own son better than anybody else knows him. The bailiffs were in Wotton Hall when I married my husband; it was my money that saved him from bankruptcy, and after his death I lived in three or four rooms with two maid-servants upon very little—a few pounds a week, saving whenever I could, with one thought only: the redemption

of the estates from mortgages and the rebuilding of Wotton Hall. I gave Hugh a free property when he came of age and a large sum of money in hand. He has been a good son and obedient, I will say that; he abandoned the thought of Oxford, on which his heart was set, and came home to rebuild the Hall, and fifteen thousand pounds were spent, perhaps wasted, for Wotton Hall will be but a vanity if he doesn't marry. I have heard that expression before, the priest said; he told me that that is how you view Wotton Hall in the event of his not marrying. A step to the marriage bed, she snapped out, that's how he looks on the sacrament; he doesn't hesitate to speak his mind plainly. But if he doesn't marry what is going to happen to him? He is not going to be a soldier nor a sailor nor a barrister, and he doesn't care for Parliament. He is but two-and-twenty, Mrs. Monfert. But at two-and-twenty a man should know his own mind; your son is only seventeen and already has accepted the priesthood as an end. But you would not wish Hugh to enter the Church, Mrs. Monfert? Enter the Church! But he is the last; and if he should ever speak to you of entering the Church I hope you will tell him that he can be of more service as a layman than as a cleric. Almost the very words you use to me, Mrs. Monfert, I used to him. He answered that he would like to do something for his Church, and that if I thought he could be of more help as a layman than as a cleric, he would accept the laity as his lot. Indeed, he spoke very feelingly. I should have thought that this was an opportunity for you to impress upon him that marriage was his duty. Did you? No, I did not, the prelate answered, for my experience tells me that all attempts at direct influence fail. So there's nothing for me to do but to cross my hands and wait, she said. We can influence indirectly, Dr. Knight interposed, and that is what

I tried to do and what I venture to say you should try to do. Try to lead him—— Ah, you have a son and a daughter; you are going to France to bring her home from a convent. Would you like to see her a nun? Mrs. Monfert's impetuosity embarrassed the priest, and he answered: My children must choose for themselves. As far as any human beings may be said to be uninfluenced, they are. The fact that I chose to take Orders after my wife's death may have influenced Percy. How can I say? My daughter has shown no signs up to the present of a religious vocation. She is coming home and will live with her aunt till she meet with somebody whom she may care to marry. I think you would like my daughter. Mrs. Monfert answered that she was certain she would. The portrait you drew of her last night allows me to see her through her brother. I conveyed a wrong impression, Dr. Knight replied, if I said anything that led you to think she is as gifted as her brother—— Who talks to me, Mrs. Monfert interjected, soliciting my opinions. A little flattery—— You're wrong; I assure you, Mrs. Monfert, Percy is always sincere; he draws his originality from it. And the President entertained Mrs. Monfert with an amusing account of an opera that his children had composed between them, till they reached the end of the ride, where the trees were distributed sparsely, many having been felled for the rebuilding of barns, byres, and farm gates. My object being, said Mrs. Monfert, to save money during Hugh's minority. The park paling is, I assure you, an expensive item in the running of this demesne.

They were now among the last trees, small oaks affording very little shade, and in front of them a rough path descending amidst much rubble between broken hedges, past several well-built cottages. Mrs. Monfert had built these herself, and called at three doors, to

speak a few words with the butler's wife and to pass on for a chat with the gardener's daughter, who sometimes came to the Hall to do needlework; and she was voluble about the folk who lived in the third cottage till the broken road they were descending entered the smooth high road that wound round the park palings, overshadowed by great trees. You asked me just now, Mrs. Monfert said, about the thinning of the oak wood; if I had not had an oak wood to thin, think how much this paling would have cost me during eighteen years. And leaning over the park paling they looked down into the sunny dells and dingles, filled with tall grasses and withering willow weed, stunted hawthorns, with here and there a wild apple or an ilex, their hearts filled with the exalted melancholy that an autumn park in its transient glory whispers to the transient owner and to the passer-by. The road descended steeply and at the bottom of the hill they passed through a gate, and following a path which would lead them to the house, they found themselves for the first time that morning in the impenetrable shade that only the uncouth hornbeam affords; in rugged and grotesque shapes these trees grew in profusion along the park palings and up the hillside on their right, and Dr. Knight looked upon the path as one wholly suitable for the reading of the breviary. But he did not speak what was passing in his mind; Hugh walking here in a cassock, knowing well that a joke on such a subject would prove distasteful to Mrs. Monfert. We lunch at one, she said, and you would perhaps like a little rest before luncheon? Or it may be that you have some letters to write? If so, you will find all that you require in the library. I will postpone my letters unless we are going for a long drive in the afternoon, the priest answered, and beguiled by the leafy quietness of the path they were following they walked in silence till they

passed out of the dense wood into the shade of the elms leading to the gate of the garth.

As they passed through the gate the young men ran by them on some project of their own, but on hearing his sister's name Percy stopped. They are talking of Beatrice, he said to Hugh. Come, let us listen. Hugh has not heard, father, of the play Beatrice and I wrote together—— But I have told Mrs. Monfert about it and you can tell Hugh later, Dr. Knight said somewhat drily, and Mrs. Monfert, pitying Percy for the snub that he had received, she thought unnecessarily, asked him at luncheon to tell her how he and his sister had achieved the difficult task of writing together. She showed me what she had written, Percy answered, and I altered it. Didn't you quarrel over the alterations? We did sometimes; but in the end Beatrice saw that she was wrong. Both my children, Dr. Knight interposed, were asked by a London manager to appear nightly, a proposal to which, of course, I could not assent. Which was a great disappointment to you both? asked Mrs. Monfert. At the time, Percy answered, it was; but I am glad now, for two years afterwards I began to perceive in myself intimations of a call to the priesthood. Beatrice, perhaps, said Mrs. Monfert, will be called to the convent. I don't believe you would think so, replied Dr. Knight, if you knew her, and turning to Percy he asked for his opinion. Percy could not see his sister in a nun's habit, and Mrs. Monfert took occasion that evening to speak of Beatrice several times and to remind Dr. Knight that it would give her great pleasure to make his daughter's acquaintance. Dr. Knight saw no reason why not—the dates would fit in, and he agreed to allow Percy to remain at Wotton Hall till the end of the vacation, now drawing to a close. Three weeks, exclaimed Percy, will be enough to finish our work, or at least to

get it well in hand. And pray what may your work be? Dr. Knight asked. Hugh began a portrait sketch of me this morning, Percy replied, and I have to consider the illustrations that I am going to do for his poem of Phidias leading Pericles from scaffolding to scaffolding to the top of the Parthenon, explaining the sculptures as they ascend. A splendid subject for a poem, father, isn't it? A very good one indeed if the poet have wings to rise above his subject, Dr. Knight answered, at which words Hugh's face fell. I hope, said Mrs. Monfert, that you will not shut yourselves up in the Barn, talking of Greek sculpture and mediaevalism all the time. I shall expect you to come down for meals at least and to help to entertain the visitors that are coming for the week-end. Another snub! Hugh said to himself, and he rejoiced, for he felt a strength rising within him that would allow him to withstand his mother.

But why, Percy, did you side with her and against me? he asked as soon as an opportunity occurred for them to whisper together. Before your mother and my father, Percy answered, a little diplomacy was needed. After all, your mother only expects us to come down for meals, and we must have our meals somewhere, and the visitors—— I know what coming down for meals means, Percy, and you don't, Hugh said. But what is to be done? I cannot spend these next three weeks with my mother's visitors. I feel a restlessness that I can't overcome. If you feel like that, Hugh, the best thing we can do is to go away; and a walking tour through Essex suggesting itself, he asked Hugh what he thought of their going away together without saying a word to anybody. Yes, that's the only thing to do, Percy; after all, I am two-and-twenty and need not ask my mother's permission to go away on a walking tour. But why through Essex? And he confided his ideas forthright that Essex

was a straight, prim, Anglo-Saxon county in mind and in appearance, with slow peasants living contentedly in villages overlooking low-lying fields and sluggish rivers. A willow land, Percy interposed, and the tone of his friend's voice warned Hugh that Percy was not altogether in agreement with him in his depreciation of willows. But he had to speak his mind about Essex, which, he said, was without a coast in any real sense of the word, only mud-banks and sea-side resorts, and he strove to frighten Percy with the news that they would travel day after day without meeting a ruin or hearing a legend. You see, I have been here all my life, Percy, and willows and mud-banks have grown wearisome; but you are my guest and must choose; let's think.

And the Lake country was considered in view of the pleasure to be gotten from visiting the houses that Wordsworth, Coleridge, and De Quincey had lived in; but unlike Hugh, Percy did not care about acquiring a memory of the Lake poets, and his thought went instead to Cornwall, seeing in the castle of King Mark, in the orchards by the river (in which he would hide King Mark in a tree with a bow and arrow, waiting to shoot the lovers as they went by), subjects for drawings; he would like to return to the primitive fable of a mad Tristan returning to curse a faithless Isolde. Then let it be Cornwall, cried Hugh, but Percy was not sure that they would find more of King Mark's castle than formless heaps of stones; and afraid that their walking tour might not come to pass, Hugh spoke of Scotland and then of Wales, for Wales was a country with a language, a history, and a literature. So, too, was Scotland, but Scotland was far away, and half their holiday would be spent in trains going there and returning. Whereas Wales is at hand, Percy. But why decide before we arrive in London? asked Percy, and that seeming plain

sense they were in the train early next morning debating whether their tour should be through Scotland or Wales. Conway Castle was by the sea, and the sea, Hugh said, brought to him a sense of freedom as nothing else did. The sea, not the sea-side, he added, but without obtaining Percy's sympathy. Why not Tintagel? Percy did not answer, and Hugh tried to remember some great Scottish ruin, something more than formless heaps of stones. He voted against the Hebrides, saying that they were too far away and were not likely to contain any fine ruins. Northumberland, he said, certainly abounds in the castles we want, but I can't call to mind any names. But we can't remain in London, that's certain, Percy answered. A guide-book will give us all the information we need, said Hugh. The men who write guide-books are not artists, my dear Hugh; we must be guided by our instinct. And on arriving at Liverpool Street they drove to Euston, and leaving their bags at the railway hotel they repaired to the station, where Percy engaged several porters in conversation, asking each what part of the country he had come from; but unluckily every one was from the Midlands. A wretched station, said Percy; if the General Manager had his wits about him he would employ porters from different parts of the country. How are we to get out of London? Nobody here seems ever to have heard of a ruin, much less seen one. Come, Hugh, let's jump into the next train. We can leave it when we are weary. But the tickets! cried Hugh, amazed at the daring of Percy's thought. We needn't have tickets; we can pay the collector when he comes round for them. And having possessed themselves of their bags and taken two tickets that would give them the right to go on the platform, they waited till a train appeared destined for a long journey. We must jump in the moment the guard blows

his whistle, said Percy, or if he be at the end of the platform we'll wait till the train is rolling out.

Hugh was very nearly left behind, but Percy managed to pull him in, and they sat looking at each other, wondering what was going to happen next. The ticket collector will tell us that we are in the wrong train, said Percy, but we must beg of him to take the money for the journey's end without telling us what the end will be, for all the fun will be spoilt if we know where we are going. Hugh was afraid that the ticket collector would think them mad, and he began to foresee their adventure ending in a police court with an alienist giving evidence in the witness box. Now mind you ask no questions, Hugh, but just pay the money and give him a tip to hold his tongue. Hugh promised, but he blundered in his answers and Percy had to come to his help. The story Hugh was attempting to tell soon straightened out in Percy's telling; the ticket collector beamed, took their money, and wished them a pleasant journey. We shall pass, he began, through many pleasant—— But Percy held up his finger, and Hugh expatiated in the pleasure of the fine weather till the collector retired to the next carriage. We shall alight when the spirit moves us, said Percy. We are in a train bound for a long journey, Hugh answered, for a restaurant car is attached to it. So much the better, said Percy. I hope the luncheon is a good one, for I'm sharp-set, aren't you? Hugh admitted that he could eat, and after luncheon Percy proposed that they should jump out at the next stop, and Hugh, who was hardening to the adventure, swore that if the next town was without a ruin or a picture gallery they would hop into another train and leave it—— When we are tired of it, Percy interjected. We are in search of adventures, and it is said that whoever seeks adventures finds them; and

if nothing comes our way, we shall know at least that the man who invented the maxim was a liar.

IV

The town that they found themselves in had all the appearance of being fully organised with trams and hotels and large shops. It had sprung up in the middle of a plain during the last fifty years, and was by many degrees uglier than London; such was the belief of the young travellers, who left it next morning, their budget of information regarding English towns enlarged. But the train that took them away was a slow one, and leaving it they lounged about a platform at which few express trains stopped, till Percy called Hugh's attention to a train advertising a strange name. An almost impossible bourne, he cried in his spleen. I don't believe that any such place exists in fact. I believe that Mow Cop exists only in the railway company's imagination. Let's jump in, and if we don't arrive we can bring an action against the company. Two hours later the guard cried: All change here for Mow Cop, and after a moment's consultation Hugh and Percy agreed that travelling by train had become so monotonous that they would do better to start across country on foot, trudging from inn to inn, their knapsacks on their back, for only in this way would they escape from the rut of civilization, which they took pleasure in defining as members of Parliament, professors of art and literature, and—— Schoolmasters! cried Percy, forgetful that his father was one, till Hugh's solemn face reminded him of his mistake, which he strove to put right by including parsons of the Church of England in his list of the useless classes. The dissidents pay their own ministers as we do, Hugh said, and Percy interposed that Catholicism was a State religion on the Continent, a remark that called into question the

temporal power of the Pope, which Hugh said the present Pope had no power to resign. I suppose you're right, Percy answered, but however that may be, the beauty of the morning makes it almost a voluptuousness to live, and Hugh, anxious to show that Percy's thought was common to him, answered that it was by leaving the rut of civilization that he could regain his youth. You have not lost yours, Percy, he said, an avowal trembling on his lips, but he did not like to make any definite charge against his mother, nor to ask Percy if he did not feel that Stanislaus College and his father would in the end rob him too of his youth. The fairest thing we have and the briefest, he said, finding it not reprehensible to say as much, so long as he did not draw conclusions; and though he thought the words: To live on such a day was almost a voluptuousness, sounded odd on the lips of a boy dedicated to religion, he refrained from questioning Percy, and the beauty of the morning absorbed him without stint till returning to the thought of their escape from civilization, he asked Percy if he did not feel that there were two classes and only two: those who work in the fields and draw their substance from the earth which God has given them to till, and those who teach men to raise their thoughts above the earth to heaven: We being neither all spirit, nor all body. In answer to him Percy said that he would like to add that he could barely separate the artist from the priest, for art was a religion, and it, too, raised men's thoughts from the earth, that is to say, from material interests and desires, from the merely natural cravings of the flesh.

And whilst Hugh considered the introduction of the artist into the scheme of life as formulated by him, he remarked, on turning to Percy with some new thought, or what seemed to him one, that Percy had already forgotten both artist and priest. For the loveliness of the

world is enough for him, he said to himself, and envying Percy his detachment from moral beliefs, he sought forgetfulness of his own in the beauty of the woods and fields and the high loitering clouds. And for a while he admired the spectacle of the day without being able to feel it was enough, whereas to Percy the afternoon was a thing in itself, a discovery that awoke a grief in his heart or a sad tenderness; and looking backward for the cause of this division, he began to attribute it to early circumstance, to his lonely life with his mother in Wotton Hall, or was he more susceptible to the Virgilian sense of the tears that are in things than Percy, more Pagan than Percy, who was going to be a priest? As the miles went by the wonderment of the young travellers increased at the emptiness of the fields, with no more than a horse grazing by the hedgerow in this field, and in the next a few cattle, but nowhere a yoke of oxen making with trailing gait for the headland. Percy regretted the oxen on the ground that their absence robbed husbandry of a sign of its antique lineage. If my vacation were longer, we might have gone to France, he said, and thick in the new desire the walking tour they were now engaged on began to seem but a prelude of some greater tour that they would undertake through the southern provinces of France, from Avignon southward, through the great Roman country, stopping at all the Roman towns, Orange, Carcassonne, and Arles. There was no reason why it should not be undertaken after Percy's ordination, or before it next year. My holidays in the summer are two months, Percy said, and my father is anxious that I should have opportunities of practising drawing.

Whereupon was projected an illustrated account of the forthcoming summer tour in France, amid Hugh's misgivings that no drawing he might do would bear comparison, even for the moment, with Percy's slightest

casual jottings in his notebook—any one of those delightful remembrances of a vagrant or a ruin, of the shape of a river as it wheeled round a field shadowed by willow trees.

The lads saw the world with different eyes; to Hugh the fields were full of beauty, it is true, but empty and silent, whereas to Percy the life of the hedgerows was always under his eyes—the field flowers not yet over, and these he knew by their leaves and petals; and he had eyes for the hedgehog in the brambles and ears for the cry of the rabbit pursued by a stoat. He would call Hugh to see the kestrel high in the air at poise, watching, he said, for a field-mouse. There, he drops, he has got him! Nor were his interests confined to beast-kind and bird-kind; he loved his fellows and engaged them in talk, getting a whole life's history from the old man of eighty who had walked every morning from village to village for more than seventy years, and thought it as likely as not that he would do so till he was over the hundred. Percy's drawing of the old fellow did not require a sitting; it was done after bidding him good-bye. Soon after they met with a man who had partridges to sell, and of these they were glad to buy three, for their last dinner was not a pleasant remembrance. These will make a nice dinner for us, said Percy, turning to the man who had sold them the birds. They will indeed; finer birds I have never seen, he answered, ruffling their feathers, and asking Hugh to feel the breasts. Plumper than any dairymaid's, he added with a chuckle, annoying Hugh, who mentioned to Percy when the man had departed that he believed him to be a poacher, and that they shouldn't have bought the birds from him. You see how anxious he was to get rid of them. Had he come by them honestly, he wouldn't have sold them to us for a shilling apiece. Well, Percy answered, we have got them

now, and let us hope the landlady—— How far away did he say the village was? About two miles, Hugh replied, and they fared on through a rough country, covered with short herbage, a dark green country, almost treeless, with long, low hills in the near distance, the dusty road continually ascending and descending, till walking became monotonous and they too weary to admire the patches of vivid green around the steads wherever there were a few trees, a warrant that there had been rain lately. At last a grove showed against the sky, and Hugh said: He told us to look out for a grove, saying that we should find the village behind it. And they found the inn, not at all as the poacher had described it, but a mere public house, where they judged they would find little but drink, and to be consumed on the premises at that. We were lucky to have fallen in with the man with partridges, Percy said, to which Hugh answered: We shall be luckier still if we are not asked where we got them. You see, I am a landlord, and buying birds that have been poached—— There was no time for him to finish his sentence, for they were at the inn door; and it was pleasing to find that there was a parlour to be let, and a maid-of-all-work, who carried their bags upstairs to the first floor, inviting them to follow her. Any of these rooms you can have, she said, and having chosen the two that seemed the cleanest, they returned to their parlour, surprised that the interior of the house should be better than the exterior. It's generally the other way round, said Hugh, and the young travellers threw themselves into two armchairs to wait for the coming of their dinner.

But after ten minutes' rest, Percy detected the smell of a bar, and the bar of a wayside inn he could not resist, the talk of hinds and vagrants always supplying him with memories literary and pictorial. So tracing the

smell of beer down a long passage, he came upon the bar in a dark corner, and calling for a glass of ale that would save him from appearing to be an eavesdropper, he gave ear to the local idiom, relishing each turn of phrase, till the sound of voices further away beguiled him from the bar down another stretch of twisting passage leading to the kitchen, a low-ceilinged room with a fire at the end of it, and a table set cross-wise at which several men and women sat eating their supper. A poorer class of wayfarers than ourselves, Percy said to Hugh, who had joined him; kitchen and dormitory in one, he whispered, indicating with a nod the beds that he had already discovered in the corner. There's a smell of the sea in this kitchen, he added aloud, or is it drains? Cockles! said the woman next to him, a round-faced, black-haired woman, splashed with mud. The finest in Wales, she continued, and I might say in England, for there's no such cockles picked as on these Welsh shores. Now let me show you what I have in my basket. These are samples, but I can sell you the samples. And do you do well at cockle picking? Percy asked. Fairly well, sir, round about seven-and-six a day; but not a word of that, for I get seven-and-six a week parish relief, and if it were known I might get prisoned. But you are gentlemen, or not far away from gentlemen; I can tell that by your clothes, and discovering her basket of samples, she began to extol the quality of her cockles, gathered by herself, she said, wading up to her knees; but not satisfied with her words, she hoisted her petticoats, showing a pair of coarse calves, and feet thrust into broken boots, and so that she might continue her patter, Percy bought a pint of cockles from her. And the other gentleman—he'll want a pint, too? A pint will be nothing between you. Hugh consented to be a purchaser, and whilst she was measuring out the second pint, Percy asked her if

she had come from the sea that day, to which she answered that she came yesterday, and had slept in the bed yonder. And the others, said Percy, whom I see? Well, they slept too. But there are but two beds. The sociable ones, she explained, sleep together. And the unsociable ones? he asked. Oh, they sleep in the chimney corners, like old Ellen there. She won't come into bed with us. She's asleep now. And through the drifting smoke from the range they caught sight of a thin, middle-aged woman in an old green cloak that barely covered her. We are glad not to have her sleep with us, said the cockle-seller, for she keeps us awake with her dreams. Percy was eager to learn more about the kitchen folk—we are only the parlour folk, he said to Hugh. Now, are you, sir? said the cockle-seller, overhearing him, and what line of business are you in? But before he could answer her the landlady came, making her way with difficulty through her children and guests. You won't mind waiting for your dinner a little longer, sirs, for old Ellen, who can pluck a fowl in half the time of anybody else in the parish, is asleep. You see, she's tired, poor thing, for thinking of her son she lost in the war. So if you don't mind waiting a few minutes more, my daughter will clean the birds, though she isn't handy at the job.

At that moment a great burr of voices came down the passage from the bar, beery breaths and belchings, and drinking and shouting and telling of a great capture of poachers they had made that afternoon, a rout of game-keepers and hirelings from some great estate in the neighbourhood came through the doorway, saying how they had gotten three to the police station and that with the evidence they had against them none of the three would get less than three months hard. Hugh and Percy learnt that the poachers had escaped the keepers

till now, their dodge being gamecocks, so said a spare man with a red beard and small, thin grey eyes. They comes into the woods with a gamecock with steel spurs fixed over the natural, and to get the cock to crow they crows themselves; they've got the pheasant's crow to the pitch, and down comes a pheasant and 'e gets a spur through 'is 'ead in the first bout. This time the cock wants no sham crow to set hisself off; 'e crows 'is battle crow and down comes another pheasant, and 'e is served the same way as the last. Not the sound of a gun in the woods, and 'ow is a man to tell that the cock-crowing isn't in the vale. Why, nobody can tell. There's no more daring poacher than the Welshman; 'e's out with 'is cock every moonlight night. A wily lot, but this time we was the wiliest. Hullo! Why, what's this? Three partridges! And off our fields, I'll be bound. Now, 'oo's been selling partridges 'ere? The two young gentlemen sitting in front of you, said the landlady, brought the birds to me to be cooked, and you can see for yourself that they are not poachers. We didn't say they was poachers, answered the head gamekeeper, a burly, red-faced man in a buff coat, but I'd like to hear how they come by the birds. Before I answer that question, said Percy, will you tell me who you are? We are Sir Charles's keepers, and all the men you see about are under-keepers and men in his employ. Is that good enough for you? One more question, said Percy. By what right do you put these questions to me? By the right—well, we'll talk about the right, said the man (whose mind was already a bit dim with the drink he had taken), at the police station. Come along with me, both of you. My guests are not taken in my house! cried the landlady. These gentlemen have come from London—— Come from London! Look at their boots! said the red-bearded under-keeper. We have walked to-day from—

I've forgotten the name of the village. Do you remember it, Hugh? You'll remember the name at the police station and you can tell the story to the sergeant, the under-keeper answered, laying hands upon Percy, who flung the glass of ale he was drinking in the man's face. The under-keeper answered with a blow and Hugh, who went to Percy's help, was seized by the keepers and their men.

There were many friends of Mrs. Jones, the landlady, in the kitchen at the time, and these at once pushed through the keepers, blocking the doorway, and an ugly scrimmage might have begun if it had not been stopped by old Ellen, who rose from her chair with a shriek, crying: What is this stir, this broil, awaking me from my dream? It is gone, it is gone! And what dream were you dreaming, ma'am? asked the cockle-seller. What dream would I be dreaming, Ellen answered, but my son, who was killed in the war, and was here a minute ago as plain as any of you before me, telling of the battle in which he fell and where he is now lying in a field in Flanders—where three trees grow together in an angle. I can't miss it, he says, and before I go will you all join me in a prayer that I may find him. Without knowing rightly what they were doing, all fell on their knees, with Hugh amongst them, so lost in amazement at the ghostly return of the son to his mother, that he could not do else but pray that he rest; and it was not till he rose from his knees that he remembered Percy, whom he found lying on the floor stunned by the blow. Percy, Percy! he cried, and then turning to those who were crowding round old Ellen, he asked for help. Will nobody fetch a glass of water? Not the man who dealt the blow, who may have killed him. I'll go and fetch you a glass of water, answered the cockle-seller. What beasts you all are, Hugh cried to the others, what beasts! Hush, hush, let's hear what she says, they answered him. Tell us, ma'am, how he was

killed. Did he tell you that? He did, troth and faith! He lifted his shirt and showed me a great gash in his side made by a shell. You were on your knees, ma'am, before you awoke. Was I now? she answered. Shed no more tears, mother, he said, for if you do my wound will never heal; and I said: Son, son, how is that? and I might have had his answer to tell if you hadn't awoke me with your shouting. A row about partridges! she cried and looked round the kitchen, her eyes still full of her dream. Now what have we here? said somebody. Murder may have been done here, replied Hugh, and you listen to a ghost tale whilst my friend dies! When I asked 'im, said the under-keeper, to tell me where 'e got the partridges 'e flung a glass of ale in my face. So it was you that struck the blow? asked Hugh. You know these men, Mrs. Jones? They are Sir Charles Williams's keepers, sir. Will none of you help me to carry my friend upstairs? The under-keeper came forward. No, not you, not you; it was you that struck him. Is there nobody here who will go to the doctor for me? You are the keepers of Sir Charles Williams, my neighbour in Essex? The same, answered the head-keeper. I, too, have keepers in Essex, as many as he has. Your friend is coming to, sir, said the keeper. He is only a bit dazed, and what can you expect from my mate, who got all the beer in his face? No man can keep still and 'ave ale thrown in 'is face, the under-keeper answered. Has anybody gone for the doctor? Hugh asked, and on being told that the doctor had been sent for he bade Sir Charles Williams's keepers make way for him, and hoisting Percy over his shoulder he carried him upstairs; and having laid him on his bed he called from the stair-head that brandy should be brought to him.

To put Percy to bed was Hugh's task evidently, and he had just finished unlacing Percy's boots when Mrs. Jones

came into the room. Open the knapsack, Hugh said, and give me his nightshirt, and whilst Mrs. Jones unstrapped the knapsack and sought for the garment, Hugh tried vainly to get Percy's arm out of his coat. But to disentangle a fainting man from a coat is not easy for anybody, and Hugh called to Mrs. Jones. With her help this was done and Percy's shirt and collar unfastened and the nightshirt poised over his shoulders. Poor young man, said the landlady, as delicate and as white as a girl! How that brute could have struck him! Hugh cried, but he shall pay for it. He shall, he shall! he muttered as Mrs. Jones raised the bedclothes and Percy was laid between the sheets. Percy, are you feeling better? Speak a word. Look at his face! he cried. How swollen it is. Yes, sir, his face is swollen from the blow, but he'd have come to long ago if he hadn't been worn out. I think you said you had come fifteen miles? Yes indeed, Hugh muttered, I am much to blame, and he begged Percy to swallow a few spoonfuls of soup; and the tray was scarcely off his bed when the cockle-seller, who had gone for the doctor, returned saying that the doctor had gone away to attend a patient and would not be back till late, but she had left a message for him and he would come on at once if he got it, and if he didn't he would come early in the morning for certain. Why should he be out to-night of all nights? Hugh cried. Another piece of bad luck! Can I do anything more for you, sir? asked Mrs. Jones. No, there's nothing to be done now but to wait. Won't you have anything to eat, sir? Hugh shook his head.

The door closed, and remembering that he had always lived without giving grievous offence to God (he dared not think that he had lived without sin, but without grievous offence, outside of mortal sin), he fell upon his knees to pray that God might not take his friend from

him, saying: God is good, of that we are sure, else he would not be God, and therefore I pray thee, O my God, to spare his life, for I need him and cannot live without him. I am lonely in my life, as thou knowest well. O God, be merciful, be merciful this once to me. I have asked nothing of thee ever before, only that I might love and obey thy will, but this thing I pray, I pray thee to grant. All we know of thee, O my God, is thy goodness, which is infinite, and it is to thy infinite goodness that I appeal now in my great need; for I am weak, as thou knowest, and if all things be taken from me I may have no strength to live, no strength to love thee as I would love thee, no strength to obey thee, but shall be a thing worthless in this world. We are here to win a place in the next world, and I shall have no strength, or fear I shall have none. I would not give way to despair, O my God, and despair is nigh when I think of his death. But every Christian has hope in his God. Didst thou not send thy son here to suffer death in atonement for our sins? Therefore thou wilt not deny my prayer, to grant a few years of life to us both that we may love and honour and glorify thee. Thou hearest me, for thou hearest all things. Thou seest me by his bedside praying, for thou seest all things. O my God, I am sorely stricken; be merciful, be merciful to me, for I need thy mercy. Let him live, let him live, let him live, and all my life shall be devoted to thee and in thanksgiving shall be spent, I swear it. Thou, who didst create my life, shall have it all, here and hereafter. He rose from his knees and stood in a sort of dazed stupor looking at Percy, his face laid against the pillow still and white like a piece of sculpture on a tomb. If he were to die to-night and I watching! I might be driven to—but the suicide dies in mortal sin and hell is his punishment. But in a moment of madness . . . and again he fell on his knees. O my God,

I have had little joy in my life; only money have I had, which I did not want and which gives me nothing. I have always loved and feared thee. O God, I have, I have, and thou knowest I have. My mother, who is hard, for that is her way, I have stood by, for she stood by me. I have tried to be a dutiful son, for thou hast said: Love thy parents as thyself. And thou, whose eyes and ears are upon all and every thing, without whose will not a sparrow falls, spare him to me. Why take back what thou hast given? No, dear God, thou wilt not do that, for I could not bear it, and thou dost not lay on anybody a heavier burden than may be borne.

He ceased, he knew not why, for much more was in his heart, but he ceased, and the long, weary night of watching began to go by very slowly. At intervals it seemed to him that Percy ceased to breathe, and he would then steal round the bed to the other side, frightened. But no, he still breathed, and Hugh returned to his chair pursued by the same fears, asking himself again and again if God would take Percy to himself in the night and if he (Hugh) in his hopelessness would be able to bear with the divine will. I cannot live without him; therefore I may hope that God will not take him, for God disposes our chances according to his wisdom. . . . Out of nothingness he awoke, to lose himself again in another round of sad thoughts, remembering that he had been averse from the purchase of the partridges, knowing them to be stolen. But he had lacked courage, and was this his punishment? He could not think that Percy was stricken for the purchase of partridges, nor he for his acquiescence in the purchase. He sat watching the circle of light on the ceiling, asking himself how this terrible mishap had come about, till a grey light began in the windows and the distant crowing of cocks was heard. Soon after a cart rattled down the village street, but

without awakening Percy, and Hugh said: The longer he sleeps the better. There came a patter of sheep in the road; a dog began to bark, and he thought: A shepherd taking his flock to market; and then the crowing of the cocks became so loud that he whispered: Percy will awaken surely, and he passed round the bedside to listen for Percy's breathing. He breathes softly like a child; and he returned to his chair, and overcome by his instinct he fell upon his knees and thanked God that Percy's life had been spared. What may happen to-morrow we do not know, but Percy has been spared this night, he muttered, and for this mercy his soul poured itself out in incoherent words of rapture and thankfulness, after which he must have dozed a little in his chair, for he was awakened by the sound of footsteps and doors opening; and these were welcome sounds, for the house was now awake and the doctor would not much longer be delayed. An hour later Mrs. Jones came to the door, which Hugh opened to her, and in reply to her question how the young gentleman had passed the night, she heard that he had slept without awakening once. A night like that is the best of doctors, she answered, and coming over to the bedside and speaking in a whisper she remarked that his face was badly swollen. Percy opened his eyes and after staring about him vaguely, trying to collect his thoughts, he began to remember the circumstance of overnight. He asked what time it was and spoke of getting dressed. But the young gentleman isn't thinking of leaving his bed! I am afraid he is thinking of continuing our tour on foot, Hugh answered derisively, but the doctor—— The doctor will have something to say about that! growled Percy. Why have you sent for the doctor? And falling back upon his pillow and staring at Hugh, he said: You look as if you had not been asleep, Hugh. What's the matter? You did not think, Percy,

that I could have slept and you lying, for aught I knew, between life and death? So you have watched all night by my bedside? Hugh, give me your hand; and the hand-clasp was not relaxed till Mrs. Jones brought in Percy's breakfast. I am afraid our bacon is too fat, sir. He was a nice pig, but my children overdid him and he's mostly greasc; but you'll find some nice bits of lean. And whilst Percy sought in the tide of grease that almost overflowed the rim of the plate, Mrs. Jones's daughter brought in the doctor, who, after a brief examination of his patient's head, remarked: There was a scrimmage here last night—— It was no fault of mine, Mrs. Jones interrupted; my house is well known as the quietest and best conducted—— We will leave the patient with the doctor, Mrs. Jones, Hugh said, and prepare a statement downstairs of what happened. If you take out a summons, sir, you may be certain that the keeper will take out a cross summons. After all, it was your friend who began it—— No, no, Mrs. Jones; the keeper laid his hands on Percy, saying he must come to the station. That is not how I remember it, Mrs. Jones answered, and to get rid of her Hugh had to leave the house, and was walking to and fro under the lime trees when the doctor joined him.

He expected the doctor to speak but he seemed tongue-tied, or was it Hugh's natural anxiety that made the pause seem so long? At last, helped by a few questions, the doctor bubbled into talk, telling that the blow amounted to no more than a black eye. A blow that fells a man to the ground unconscious seems to me a blow from which we may expect evil effects, but of course, doctor, if you think—— Hugh stopped suddenly in the middle of the footpath and stared at the doctor, barely distinguishing him; and they proceeded into the village side by side, the doctor telling Hugh that the young man

was tired, worn out after a long day's tramping. Mrs. Jones mentioned fifteen miles, he said, whereupon Hugh expostulated, saying that only once or twice had they walked fifteen miles, their usual tramp being ten or twelve. Ten or twelve under a heavy knapsack! the doctor muttered, and Hugh reproached himself whilst the doctor spoke of fifteen miles a day under a knapsack as putting a great strain on a lad of seventeen or eighteen who was in himself not very strong. A blow given under these conditions, he said, would stun him. You said: who is not in himself very strong, Hugh replied, breaking the pause, and barely able to find the needed words, so afraid was he of them, he mentioned that a few days before Percy had stopped by the wayside to spit. The fact that there was a little blood does not mean lung trouble, not necessarily, he said, and waited for the doctor's answer, which was that a little blood might be regarded as symptomatic, a portent of a severe hæmorrhage later on, or as merely accidental, proceeding from local causes. And which do you think likely, doctor? The doctor answered that no one could predict, but that the young man should be careful, and relieved of his great anxiety (he had not dared to hope for so favourable a report), Hugh's eyes opened to the spectacle of a village street so wide that it seemed almost like the country. An old village, he said, passing into a new town, and began to wonder down which side street (they had passed several) the doctor would turn. He had already begun to imagine him as a little bachelor living alone in a villa with a small garden in front, iron railings and a wicket, and his imaginings were not ended when they came to the end of the high street, the doctor doing most of the talking, Hugh observing him and wondering between his thoughts of Percy how the thin, stooping little man by his side, a soft, black hat on his head and a well-worn, shiny

morning coat on his back, had come to be a doctor in this village. He walked briskly, thumping his thick stick on the pavement, his eyes upon the ground, his face so well hidden under his hat that Hugh had to peep to discover a short, thin, straggling grey beard covering cheeks and chin, a great nose with a red end; and when the doctor said: We turn to the left here, he looked up, and Hugh saw two small eyes kind almost to silliness, yet not unintelligent. And his curiosity now stirred, he began to ask the doctor questions about the town, and these proving fruitless (the doctor did not seem to know very clearly whether he was living in a town or the country), he asked him as a last resource what language was spoken, Welsh or English, and soon began to perceive that he had struck a springhead. In a very few moments it became clear that behind the doctor was a man of letters, whose mind was divided between his patients' ailments and the Welsh language; the old Welsh language of the Middle Ages, pure, unadulterated with English idiom, was his chief interest, but he was not neglectful of the language which is still the home language of nearly every Welsh house, and Hugh learnt from him that the Welsh spoken in South Wales was not the best Welsh. Or rather I should say, said the doctor, it's looked down upon by Anglesey; but there is good Welsh and bad Welsh, and the good is spoken north, south, east and west by the minority, and the bad is spoken north, south, east and west by the Majority. Just as the English language is, Hugh replied, and the doctor, now fully roused, rattled off much accumulated information, interspersed with the names of many great poets. Forgetful that Hugh did not know Welsh, he lost himself in the beauty of a celebrated passage so completely that he passed his own house by without seeing it, not discovering his mistake for fifty or sixty yards. I think we have passed my house, he said,

looking round like one who was trying to remember the neighbourhood. Ah, here we are, he continued, pushing the gate open, the very gate that Hugh had foreseen. But he had not thought that the garden it enclosed would have been allowed to run to waste (only two dying laurels survived in it), and he had not thought that the house the doctor lived in would be so bare of furniture, nor so full of books. The surprise of the room he was led into was a grand piano covered with scores and manuscript music. It was not to these, however, that the doctor first directed Hugh's attention, but to the books on the walls, rare editions of the Welsh poets, which he took down from the shelves and held with great care in his thin, bony hands. His skull was small, round, and shiny, a bare skull with a rim of hair, and he continued to talk of ancient Welsh till Hugh, wearying a little of a subject of which he knew nothing, asked him if he had always lived in Wales; and it was through this question that the talk returned to Percy, the doctor telling that in his youth he had been ordered to a warm climate, but dropping, as he talked, into a long and rather tiresome digression regarding the most suitable climate for the cure of lung trouble; but he emerging, however, from it at last. He had not been able to go to Davos or to South Africa for lack of money, but owing to some knowledge of Arabic he had gone to Palestine in connection with a Society interested in the excavation of ancient Palestinian cities, especially that of Gaza. And Hugh listened amazed to the doctor, who told that whilst engaged in this work of excavation his leisure time was given to the writing of a grammar of a language spoken by a tribe of gipsies that wandered through Western Asia, visiting Europe rarely, if ever. It seemed to Hugh that he was listening to a fairy tale, but the doctor drew the library steps forward and descended with a volume

in his hand, putting the thought into Hugh's mind of the sharp muzzle and half-blind eyes of a ferret. As the grammar was entirely unintelligible to him, he returned it to the doctor quickly, and to carry on the conversation he remarked that the piano seemed a very fine one. Does your wife play? I am not married, the doctor answered. Who is it then that plays the piano? Hugh asked innocently, unsuspecting that an interest in ancient Welsh and the writing of the grammar of a language spoken by an almost unknown tribe of gipsies, could be associated with music. I play the piano myself, the doctor said. There is a friend of mine in the town and we play Beethoven together. And the manuscript music I see—do you write music? Yes, the doctor answered. I have touched a right note again, Hugh thought, and immediately afterwards the score of an oratorio which the doctor had composed, and which he hoped would be played at the next Eisteddfod, was put into his hands. A perilous moment this was for Hugh, for the doctor might ask him to sit down and listen to the oratorio, and to ward off this evil he took out his cheque-book. Whereupon the doctor laid aside his score, and giving his mind once more to his patient, he answered Hugh's questions with precision, speaking, so it seemed to Hugh, out of much knowledge of the subject.

His last words were that Percy must not overtax his strength, and upon that came the word: bloodless, which Hugh remembered on his way back to the inn, it seeming to him that the doctor had spoken of a transfusion of blood. But they had talked so much on so many subjects, and as every one was illustrated by anecdotes, Hugh could not remember whether the doctor had said that Percy would benefit by a transfusion of blood. He would have liked to give his blood to Percy, and it might well have been that the wish was father to the thought,

and that the doctor had said no more than that some other patient had been so benefited. He knew that the doctor had not asked for a transfusion of blood, but liked to think he had, and walked to and fro under the limes possessed by all the exaltations of sacrifice before he recovered his composure.

V

I like these plains breaking into rocky crests, Hugh said, and from the top of a high ditch he stood enamoured of a land showing like velvet under a bright sky. But don't come up, Percy, he cried, and jumping he joined Percy in the sunken road, which they followed mile after mile, seeing nothing but the road in front of them, till Percy cried at last: Look, Hugh, we have come upon the sea, or is it a cloud? Which do you think it is?

Of their long travel this lag end of it seemed the most tedious. Hugh was anxious. They were still many miles from St. David's and had walked more than five miles. If we could only see a cart, he said. But there was barely a house in sight, and at the end of another mile they began to speak of making a shift to pass the night under the lee of a haystack when a cart came by, and on questioning the driver as to the way to St. David's, he told them he was going thither. Some money was proffered, and after driving for an hour he said: Another two miles and we shall be at the inn. You see yon clump of trees? Which, Hugh asked, for there are two? The two are but a quarter of a mile apart, sir, and under the trees on the left you'll find your inn. It will be pleasant to meet the friendliness of trees again, said Percy, for we have seen none this long while; and they fell to wondering what sort of inn they were going to till the gravel sweep, from which the boundary wall had been removed,

proclaimed it to be a country house of former times converted to the needs of the traveller.

Tea and buttered toast were welcome after their long walk, and after tea, despite their walk, the temptation of the famous ruins drew them out of the inn, and they descended the steep road to where it branched, and the ruinous road to the right seeming to them more likely than the new road going by the Baptist Chapel to bring them into view of the ruins they were in search of, they shuffled through much loose rubble, coming into sight at last of a great gateway flanked by round towers and broken parapets standing over against a wild landscape. A wonderful residence the Bishop's Palace must have been, Percy said, when raiders sallied from the crests and every wood was the haunt of wolves and bears, and the Bishop's archers defended the gateway against all comers, Danish, Irish, or local. A trickle of the Alan flowed through the valley, and still speaking of the portcullis, of which they had discovered traces, and the loopholes through which the archers shot arrows at the besiegers, Hugh and Percy continued the descent, their eyes fixed on a Cathedral built largely of a violet stone peculiar to the locality, the violet tinge visible even in the great burly tower added by Bishop Gower in the fourteenth century. Before him there were other Bishops, Hugh said, but the Cathedral we are looking upon now is his work. Very much botched some fifty or sixty years ago, answered Percy; but I like the perched pinnacles of the burly tower, elegant as storks. But we are wasting our sight on the Cathedral, he cried, pointing to a ruined parapet of open arches richly carven, with a rose window—— As beautiful as the evening, he added. And dropping into silence, Hugh sought for words whereby to express the beauty of the many mullions radiating from an inner circle, but Percy's words: As

beautiful as the evening, seemed to have said everything. Yet Percy is not overcome by the beauty for its own sake, Hugh said to himself; he thinks of it all and feels it all as material for his drawing—so intensely is he an artist, he added, ashamed of having indulged in a reproof even in involuntary thought. To make amends he agreed with Percy that the Cathedral was nearly all modern, and a moment after, overcome by the thought that religion had always flourished in the valley of the Alan in Pagan as in Christian times, he walked rapt in a sense of God's presence in Nature, till they reached where the roads branched and Percy said: We are still very far from the inn; no, about a quarter of a mile, he added. And helping his friend up the steep acclivity, he reproached himself for having allowed Percy to come so far after a long walk, begging of him to lean his weight upon his arm. But I shall tire you—— No, you cannot tire me, Percy. At last the Grove Inn was reached and they were glad to retire to their beds, though it was but to toss feverishly from side to side in their rooms, each wondering if his fellow slept or waked, sleep not coming to either before morning. At ten o'clock Hugh had not the courage to awaken Percy, but laid by his door a jug of hot water and covered it with a towel, and it was twelve o'clock before they were again in the street, busy in talk about arches, Hugh, having read a few facts from a book picked out of the shelves of the bookcase in their sitting-room, telling that the Cathedral was Romanesque, built in the thirteenth century or a century later, before the pointed arch had come so far north, and that the bones of many Bishop Princes lay beneath the carven effigies. But more interesting than these, to Hugh at least, was the tomb of the great Saint of the sixth century, who was murdered by a robber on an island of the coast; and they pondered on the circum-

stance of the murder: a lonely island, a robber, and a great Saint, till Percy began to tell that his sleep was troubled last night by a dream of a robber who lived with his mistress happily in a cave until the prayers of a priest lured the woman across the sea to the island where the Saint had set up a hermitage. You don't mean, Percy, that the Saint lived with the robber's mistress! No, I didn't dream that she was the Saint's mistress, but his helpmate, and that they sat listening in the afternoons to the songs of birds till they learnt their language. It was from a bird that came over that they heard the robber was crossing in his coracle. Those dawn dreams shake one's nerves, said Hugh; and strange to say I, who rarely dream, dreamed last night. We were very tired and for a long time we must have lain dozing; dreams, it is said, come just before waking. I wish I could remember my dream—something about a hermitage; for me it was one, though it was filled with eighteenth-century furniture. You were dreaming of Wotton Hall, said Percy. I suppose I was, or something like it, Hugh answered; and descending the loose roadway, full of purple slate, he stopped to compare the stone under their feet with the slate in which some ancient architecture had sheathed the Cathedral. And pointing to the buttresses and to the round windows on either side of the doorway overlooking the Alan, he said that nobody would contend that the round windows in the Cathedral were designed by the same workman who had carved the beautiful rose window in the ruins. For these are like—— and finding at last a word to his liking, he said: These windows have no more beauty than the cartwheels lumbering at this moment down the laneway; the cartwheels are appropriate to the business they are designed for, but these round windows merely offend our eyes. At least, that is how they strike me. But you are saying nothing, Percy. I was just

thinking, Hugh, that something had to be done, for the Cathedral was shaken almost to a ruin in the twelfth century by an earthquake; Gower rebuilt it too close to the river and a subsidence began, when we don't know; but it seems clear from what you read out of the book that some rebuilding had to be undertaken in the 'sixties, else the Cathedral would have become a ruin. Of course it is arguable that a ruinous Cathedral is better than a patched Cathedral. I grant you that it was badly patched, but it must have been always ugly.

Hugh expostulated, saying that Percy should not pass judgment before he had seen the inside; whereupon they passed inside, and standing in a clumsy sort of nave Hugh asked Percy if he did not think it worthy of admiration—— Somewhat squat, but fine for Wales in the fourteenth century. We must consider the time, Hugh added. I dare say that worse things have been built since, Percy answered, but it did not look in the fourteenth century as it does to-day. All these capitals have been recarved. But the book tells us, said Hugh, that only the whitewash was removed. The book may tell what it pleases, Percy replied. Those capitals were recarved, and in its seventeenth-century whitewash the Cathedral would have looked better. Come to the ruins, Hugh, there is nothing to see here. But Hugh said he would like to find the Saint's tomb, and it seemed to Percy that they would never get out of the ugly Cathedral. But they were out of it half an hour later, admiring the great original buttresses built to support the eastern wall of the Cathedral, circled buttresses, six feet of stone and mortar, not less, falling into ruins in places. Percy praised the flowering grasses that had found roothold in the decaying masonry, and began to sketch the windows of St. Mary's Chapel, a lovely ruin, whilst Hugh went in search of the builder, who, for a fee, showed him over the Chapel, telling him

that little remained of the College, which was destroyed by order when religion was reformed in the seventeenth century. The builder tells me, Hugh said, returning to Percy, that the cloister passed under these windows. But what a beautiful drawing you are doing. You have made the mullions seem even more beautiful than they are. I don't call this drawing, Percy replied, passing his sketch to the builder; and then giving his mind to the disposition of the cloister, he fell to discovering what had once (probably in thirteen hundred and seventy) been a low wall, pillared and arched, supporting the undercroft, with a lean-to roof above it to carry off the rain, the cloister sweeping round to the right to join the Cathedral. Anon they listened to the builder telling that with the assistance of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and his wife Blanche, Bishop Houghton had founded the College, the Bishop himself endowing it for the maintenance of a master and seven priest-fellows, who were bound to live in strict obedience to the regulations laid down by him, to say the Hours and the Requiem Masses and obey without argument the Preceptor or Treasurer of the Cathedral, and—— But I see the Dean coming our way, stopping, said the builder, to rate that idle fellow, Jones, for being away at his dinner a full hour and a half. And Hugh and Percy pitied the hunchback, who might lose his job for half an hour of truancy.

All the same, without discipline the world would come to pieces like a rotten sponge, and that the Dean should not perceive their notice of him, Hugh and Percy fell to asking questions of the builder, nor had they to ask many before the Dean was among them. Whereupon Hugh began to talk, Percy thought ramblingly, of the harm to art the Reformation had worked—Destroying images, sculpture, he said, stopping for lack of words, allowing the Dean to interpose a pertinent remark that the path to

truth was always littered with material damage. Had not the Roman Church destroyed much beautiful architecture and sculpture? A tall spare man was the Dean, a long clerical foreshore, as dreary he seemed to Percy, whom he surprised by his answer to Hugh's next contention that the Cathedral, the College, and the Palace were built in Catholic times and should therefore belong to the Catholic Church. But there is no Catholic Church in Wales, he answered. Wales accepted the Reformation and therefore, so it seems to me, the Cathedral and the ruins of the College and Palace should pass over to us. Your principles, Mr. Dean, are admirable, said Percy, with the view of helping Hugh out of a controversy in which he seemed to be worsted, but the Reformed Church is not true to its principles. Ireland did not change her religion, yet—— The Irish Church was disendowed by a Protestant Minister, a fact that speaks well for the good faith of Protestantism. Many years after, Hugh interjected, and the smooth sluggish voice of the Dean answered with a serviceable quotation: The mills of God, etc., and alluding to the disendowment of the Welsh Church, the Dean lamented that the terms offered to the Welsh were not so good as those that the Irish had gotten. The disendowment has left us, he said, with not enough funds to keep the Cathedral in repair. The Cathedral did not seem to us to need repair. Not need repair! the Dean replied, raising his voice slightly. A great building needs constant attendance, and I hope since our Cathedral has been to you both a source of interest and curiosity that you will not leave without helping us to support what you partly admire. Our theology, I gather, is not the same, but appreciation of the past out of which we have come should not prevent you from assisting us. You will find a box—— I am sure that my friend and I will be glad to contribute, said Percy; we were waiting for your permis-

sion to wander about the ruins of the Bishop's Palace to draw the mullioned doorways. Could you tell us, Mr. Dean, Hugh began—— A cheque for five pounds, Percy whispered, and the Dean moved away, instructing the builder that liberty for a full inspection of the ruins was granted.

I am not sure that it was altogether right for us to contribute to the support of a Protestant place of worship, Hugh growled in Percy's ear. You must not think, Hugh, that I am indifferent to the questions of conscience that arise up in our Catholic minds, but I should like to hear how it was that the Bishop's Palace was allowed to fall into ruins. In another hundred years these ruins will be but rubble heaps. And in response to Hugh's question the builder told them that the Bishop's Palace was built about the year thirteen hundred and forty, and that it served not only as a Bishop's Palace but also as a hostel for the pilgrims who visited the Saint's shrine. They passed over a pretty stone bridge and round some garths breathing a pleasant odour of sweetbriar and flowering grasses, which they would have enjoyed longer had their enjoyment not been interrupted by the beauty of the doorway. Percy's sketch-book was out of his pocket in an instant, but the builder had a tale to tell, one worth listening to. The sketch-book was returned to the pocket, and Percy learnt from him that the cause of the ruin was Bishop Barlow's daughters. But how could the Bishop's daughters cause the ruin? asked Percy. He had five, said the builder—— Five or seven, interjected Hugh, but unabashed the builder replied that Bishop Barlow, in fifteen hundred and thirty-six, unroofed the Palace for the sake of the lead, which was sold, and procured five dowries for his daughters, every one of whom married a Bishop. Five Bishops for sons-in-law! cried Percy. I am beginning to hear the quintet, bass, baritone, tenor,

and falsetto, the low notes, of course, being given to the falsetto and the high notes to the bass. Five daughters who married five Bishops! What do you say to a little march, the March of the Sons-in-Law? Five sets of gaiters, five shovel hats! Hugh replied. What a comment the Bishop and his family are upon the Reformation, the subject of a joke and at the same time of a melancholy mood. But let us be serious. All this vast ruin is built about a quadrangle, a hundred and seventy feet long I think the builder said it was, and he is right in saying that Bishop Gower avoided the monotony of the square with projectures, keeping the same height throughout and giving due prominence to the Banqueting Hall and the Bishop's Private Apartments. The Bishop seems to have known the value of stress and reticence. And the builder told us, didn't he, that the parapet consists of a series of arches, the shafts resting on corbels, and every one different, with a pleasure walk between roofs and parapets. I can see the happy monks in my thoughts sunning themselves when the weather was fine. But before you begin to sketch the doorway, Percy, let us pass through it into the Banqueting Hall, for I would like to see the rose window from the inside.

Seven or eight steps took them into a beautiful porch, and from thence into the Hall, a magnificent hall of more than a hundred feet by some thirty or forty, and lighted by the rose window that had claimed their attention from the very first moment they looked down the valley, in the south-eastern wall. With a centre and upright quatrefoil, Hugh said, turning over the leaves of the guide-book, and four strong mullions radiating from the cardinal point, and between these three lesser ones, the inner circle not quite concentric with that enclosing the tracery but dropping a little to create an optical illusion. And closing the book, he cried: On the shore of the western sea all this

beauty was created by a people who, though barbarians in our eyes, had not outlived the age of beauty. How fond you are, said Percy, of the phrase: An age that has not outlived the age of beauty. There's always beauty if you have eyes to find it. But not the old beauty, said Hugh.

The kitchen chimney, which the builder told them had fallen only a few years before, was lying on the floor, an immense mass of masonry three or four feet in thickness that testified to the strength of the vaulting, which, though it had fallen in other places, had resisted the weight of the flue. We have just come in time, said Percy, to see these ruins at their best, for in another hundred years they will be carting the rubble away to build cottages for the population of the district, which will have trebled by that time. A shadow floated over Hugh's face, and Percy wondered why his words had troubled him, for everybody knew that all things pass away, and he suspected a secret cause. But he forgot his suspicion a moment after, for Hugh was talking gaily of this ancient method of architecture that laid an immense building like the present one over a series of crypts. In which, he said, the cooks and scullions, the grooms and pages, lived; a vast servitude, he averred, was indeed needed to keep so large a building in repair. They must have crawled like animals, Percy said, out of their burrows when the dirt on their bodies was too thick to be bearable any longer, a remark that Hugh did not like, saying that we had no intimate knowledge of how the men and women of old time lived. But where did they sleep? Percy asked, for there are but two bedrooms in all this building; and as sleep is urgent at times, they must have taken their fill of it where they fell on the rushes that strewed the floor of the Banqueting Hall. Whereupon they walked, thinking of the great servitude in the vaults, dark places into which they scarcely dared to look: But

which were more habitable, Hugh said, once than they seem at present, for the ground is higher than it was; the earth grows. All these vaults were once on a level with the quadrangle, so it seems to me.

From thence they found a path which they followed gingerly by a great breach in the vaults to a doorway leading to the Bishop's Dining-Room, about half the size of the Banqueting Hall. A modest place, just large enough to have a snack in! said Percy, who was beginning to weary of Hugh's investigations, his mind being on the drawing of the building from the quadrangle of the eastern front. But he could not begin his sketch yet awhile, for Hugh had just discovered that the Hall was lit by two windows to the north-west and four to the south-east, and that probably the recess that cut into the window at the south angle may have contained the refectory pulpit, and that behind it were traces of a passage and stair, leading, no doubt, to the minstrel gallery. Do come this way, Percy, for this doorway leads, I am sure, to the Bishop's study. There are fireplaces and chimneys, and a way leading to a small apartment as necessary in ancient life as in modern. The great Bishop hopping round in a hurry, said Percy, and all the minor Bishops and their wives waiting! But they couldn't have all been waiting at the same time unless their food disagreed with them! At which pleasantry the young men laughed heartily. I think I can see them in my thoughts gathered round this fireplace in the evening, Hugh said, and he began to speak of the forests that once covered the hills and the felling of them, several trees being needed each day to keep the Bishop warm. There seems to have been a way through here once, he continued. But we must leave the building, for the sun is shining, bringing out the shadows, and our visit to the Bishop's private Chapel can be postponed. Percy said his sketch could wait, and he

began to ask himself what Hugh expected to discover in these ruins, now ripe for drawing. Come, Hugh, sit and begin your drawing and forget the stables. But I cannot forget the pilgrims that tethered their horses, Hugh answered. But you can't draw the pilgrims, and the stables are rubble heaps, Percy retorted, and Hugh took a seat beside him. But he began no drawing, saying that he could not concentrate on the ruin, for his thoughts were on the building before the Bishop had robbed it to add to his daughters' dowries. If he had not, said Percy, he would have had his daughters on his hands, for one can barely imagine a Bishop begetting beautiful girls.

And whilst Percy drew, Hugh's thoughts returned to the great mediaeval life to which this ruin testified, and so immersed was he in the past that Percy's sketch had little or no interest for him. At every moment it seemed to him that the life herebefore was coming nearer to him; so near did it come that it was hard for him to restrain a cry. When the vision dwindled and reality returned, and he found himself among the ruins of a Palace of old time, he knew that that was why he had become so intensely conscious of the life he had always believed to be his own, a life that accident had estranged him from, casting him into one in which he would never be happy, for it was not himself. The earth, he said to himself, remembers all things, and this courtyard is pregnant with remembrances which have passed into me, and I have seen, as in an enchanted glass, that life that was lived before the world had forgotten beauty. Tears came to his eyelids; at any moment they might drop over the lids and fall down his cheeks, and if Percy were to ask him to give a reason for his tears he would not be able to give any, none that anybody would understand, not even Percy. So does happiness, he said to himself, turn to grief. Not to grief, he added, for grief is sorrow for

what we have lost, but to melancholy, for melancholy is sorrow for that which we shall never possess. And to escape from himself he broke into speech, telling Percy that they must one day visit the British Museum together. The first thing he would show him would be a missal in which a group of exquisite women in long, pale robes walked among ecclesiastics, the happy, childlike faith of the twelfth century over every face. This missal, and many others, he said, were a record of the happy life that had been lived in England in the twelfth or thirteenth century, for only a happiness, brooding far and near, could have inspired this lisping art, so April like. In answer to a question from Percy, Hugh said: An art rarely outlasts a century, and so we may say that the life of an art is hardly longer than a man's life—a few years, about which we need not quarrel.

Percy continued his drawing for some time in silence, till breaking the pause suddenly he said: I see a bland, sunny morning with the monks in their cloisters drawing tall nuns in pale robes walking among ecclesiastics, and knights riding from castle to castle accompanied by their gleemen in the slender months. But, Hugh, the innocence of the art of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries contrasted with the lewdness to which the world was given over—— My dear Percy, that view of the Middle Ages has been challenged and repudiated by all modern scholarship, above all by Walter Pater, who has shown that the genius of the cloister did not consist in the renunciation but in the transference of love from earth to heaven, getting thereby an exaltation greater than the senses could procure. He even dared to contend that there was no real difference between the practice of love in the cloister and in the castle, for the influence of the cloister had passed into the castle and set up an absent object of adoration for a present one. Dante saw

Beatrice only once and when she was a child, and this glimpse of her sufficed to fill his life. Petrarch wrote sonnets to Laura—we are not sure that she ever lived in the flesh—and Rudel, the troubadour, sang the praises of the Princess of Tripoli for many years, his love waxing yearly till he died of it on his voyage out to her. Then he did set out to visit her? interposed Percy, but without noticing the interruption Hugh mentioned another troubadour, Ramboult d'Orange, who sang the praises of the Comtesse d'Urgel and loved her all his life, though he had never seen her or she him. But if the loves of all men were in the head, said Percy, the world would come to an end. It would not matter much if it did, Hugh replied, since every man's chance of reaching heaven is small, a heresy that Percy did not attempt to controvert, preferring to listen to Hugh telling that many of the troubadours repented their sins in monasteries, and that among these repentant sinners was Bernard de Ventadorn. You don't believe that this is so, Percy? Plato was much read in the Middle Ages, and I prefer to think that the platonic loves you describe were due to his influence. But at the present moment I am more interested to hear how you came to be drawn to the Middle Ages, and how it was that the Knights of the Grail captured your imagination so completely that the life of that time seems to you more real than the life you see about you? Hugh answered that he could not remember having been drawn to the Middle Ages. I seem, he said, to have known them always, and I never can altogether surrender the belief that I am but the shadow of a knight who lived eight hundred years ago. But you are not adrift, Percy, in a world that does not belong to you. You do not seek to escape from the present; you are never homesick, for you create out of your imagination a heightened world, a dwelling for your soul. But I cannot.

I can only love the beautiful, but you make the beautiful. Look at my drawing! Percy looked at Hugh's drawing, till embarrassed by its clumsiness he returned it to Hugh with the remark that it was just in a nice state to begin over again. Hardly fair that would be, he added, if the model were a living one, but a ruin won't mind; and he continued to draw, Hugh watching every stroke with admiration, conscious that he would never acquire a skill comparable to Percy's.

What I find difficult to understand, said Percy, is your admiration for the Greeks and for the Middle Ages, two things so opposite, to which Hugh answered that whatever is loved and admired to-day was loved and admired from the beginning—For it is hard to think of man as unmindful of the beauty of the skies or of shapely mountains—and that it would seem to him that whatever man has deeply loved and pondered returns like a ghost. And which ghost is the most real to you—the fourth century before or the thirteenth after? asked Percy. The mediaeval world, Hugh replied, is nearer to me; it is my present, the Greek world is my past; in the world around me I am an exile. And you were always like that? So far as a man can know himself I was always like that, more so once than to-day, for I sometimes think the world has had its way with me, come between me and my real self, a self that nobody will ever know, not even you, Percy, who are so sensitive and sympathetic. Percy stopped drawing, saying: Tell me about yourself. I couldn't if I wished tell the nights in the garret at Wotton Hall when I threw myself on my knees and implored God—— Hugh paused, and after waiting some time for him to speak again, Percy asked him for what he had prayed. I could not tell those nights even if I wished, Hugh repeated. It may be that I prayed God might put the world back and that I might

live again as a knight, riding in the lists, and of all, practising chastity. Chastity has always been the centre of my thoughts; sometimes among the stress of modern things the idea seems to fade a little, but it brightens again, and I feel that if I were to lose it, by some mischance, I should not be able to bear with my life. On those nights I was Sir Galahad and Sir Galahad was I, and a something more than an earthly chastity was our quest together. The great loneliness of those days and nights was—but it cannot go into words; if I were the greatest writer in the world, I should fail to express it. Loneliness perhaps tells the story of my life better than any other word, how it passes from day to day, two human beings, my mother and I, divided as no two are. Any other son would have suited her better than I. Any other mother would have suited me better than she. Small wonder it is that I love the thirteenth century, for there is not even a mother for me to love in the nineteenth. I was unhappy at Stanislaus College, and unhappier still when I returned home, outwardly one of the most fortunate men in the world, inwardly the least. You see, you were free, Percy, from the beginning; your father never imposed his ideas upon you. You were brought up a Catholic, but you were allowed to accept the Catholicism that suited your temperament. I was not; it was the harshest side of Catholicism that I was asked to consider always—not heaven but hell, and that to escape hell was but the good fortune of a few.

It was so clear that Hugh was telling himself, his uttermost truth, that Percy stopped drawing. You heard a great deal of that, he said, at Stanislaus College, too much, as I have heard my father say. He was not President in your time. Your father was a beautiful influence in Stanislaus College, the only one, and if he had been President in my time much would have been

different within me and therefore without me. It was on Hugh's lips to tell that his mother was afraid that he would follow his father's foot-steps, but he checked the words, and Percy said: But you are free now; you can do what you like, think as you please, go where you please, buy what you please. You are mistaken, Percy. I was not free in the past and I shall not be free in the future. Have you forgotten why we came here? To escape from all the women that my mother asked to Wotton Hall. But your mother's friends have nothing to do with you. You can leave the table after luncheon. Hugh did not answer. Percy continued to draw, and it was some time before either spoke again. When I was a little boy, Hugh said, my mother tried to mould me, to make me according to her idea, and her idea was that I should be a good and fervid Catholic, marry, and give her grandchildren. My mother cannot change herself, and to live with a strong, resolute woman, thinking one thing and one thing only and determined to get her away, makes life unendurable. Percy, my life is sometimes almost a nightmare. I do all I can to please my mother, for I know how much I owe to her. I play draughts with her in the evening and I read to her, and last year we went abroad together. Where we stayed was hateful to me, but she liked it, for there was plenty of society. I do all I can, but what I do is as nothing, for I have disappointed her in the essential. But you are only two-and-twenty, Hugh. Nobody marries at two-and-twenty. Ah, but she suspects that I will never marry, and she is right. I don't think I ever shall. And why do you think that? Percy asked, returning to his drawing. Because I am different, Percy, from other men. Different from other men! None of us is very different from the other. In what are you different? Percy asked. I don't know, I cannot tell myself. But I know, I feel all the time,

that I am different from other men. And that is the reason you think you will never marry? Well, one of the reasons. But one day you'll meet some woman who is different from the others. I dare say that none of the women your mother asks to Wotton Hall for you to choose from is—well, a very delectable specimen of feminine humanity. Your mother presents a certain fare before you, and she says if you can't eat it, it must be because you have no appetite. When this holiday is over, Percy, I shall have to return to the struggle, and sometimes I think that I shall never be able to go back to Wotton Hall. I wonder what you would think of my sister Beatrice, said Percy. I think you would like her. Why do you think I should like her? I don't know; it just came into my head that you might like her.

VI

The day that the lads had sat sketching amid the ruins of the Bishop's Palace it had come up in Hugh's talk that all man has striven for or pondered on is deathless, again a remembrance of Pater, and as if to defend or reaffirm his metaphysics he added that man's dreams, thoughts, and aspirations belong to humanity as much as the mallow to the bank under which it flourishes and dies generation after generation. We dream the dreams of our forefathers, Hugh had said, we think their thoughts, we pray their prayers; and at the end of a pause he continued: The prayer in *The Merry Fiddlers* was but the reflowering of prayers that have been uttered how often before, and our faring from inn to inn was but a return to man's primitive nature, to the roaming animal that he is, resting in a place for a while, but longing to investigate every horizon and drawn from the hospitable shore by the barrenest island.

And what barrenest spot, they often asked themselves,

than Ramsey Island (they could see it from their bedroom windows), standing high out of the sea? and exalted in their imagination by stories of caverns known only to the seals and by the legends of its murdered hermit, they were inspired to sail a boat thither by themselves, an adventure from which they were not dissuaded by the dangers of the Sound, but rather by repeated assurances that no boatman would entrust his boat to them, and of all, at the present moment, when the spring tides were rising. But there were boatmen who would take them for the day to Ramsey Island: Mr. Williams was highly recommended to them, and after enquiry they found the street in which he lived, and further enquiries brought Mr. Williams himself downstairs. The tide is out now, he said, but it will be coming in at two o'clock, and it is no more than half a mile to the sea. I will call for you gentlemen at your inn about that time. We will just have time, Percy said to Hugh, to finish our drawings in the Bishop's Palace; and they went thither uplifted by the prospect of the adventure that awaited them, returning in an hour to have some luncheon and await Mr. Williams, who appeared a little after two and took them across some rough fields over many walls, and at one of these Mr. Williams met his comrade, who was to accompany them. For the air is still, he said; there isn't a wind about anywhere and we may have to put out the oars.

From thence the four picked their way over the rough coast of scrub and tussock grass till they came to a great inlet, a hundred or two hundred feet deep, and narrow almost as a railway line. Hugh and Percy were astonished by the cliffs, which brought the word beetling into their minds, but the boatmen told them that these cliffs were nothing to those they would see on Ramsey Island. It would be some time, however, before the tide came up,

and Mr. Williams pointed to his boat, high and dry up in the inlet, where it seemed no water would ever reach her. She'll be afloat in an hour's time, less than that, said Mr. Williams, and to help the time away he began to tell stories of all the local characters, imitating their voices, among them being a great braggart called Owen, who assigned to himself an heroic part in all the tales of shipwrecks in the Sound. It was he who directed the swimmers who undertook to carry a line through the surf to the doomed vessel. Each story ended with: Enough! The men owed their lives to me! It was the word: Enough, that seemed to be the chief relish in the stories, and both young men laughed consumedly, Percy more than Hugh, who having never lived by the sea could hardly believe that the tide would reach the boat, so far up in the inlet. But Mr. Williams said: You see yon bank, sir? As soon as the tide gets over it we shall be afloat soon after. And whilst the incoming waves swilled up the shingle, they had a pleasant talk with a poor fisherman whom they found brooding over his nets. A month's mending they will take said he in answer to enquiries, and I doubt if they'll ever be worth the time spent on them. But how did they get torn like this? asked Percy. The seal has been through them, he answered. During the war them fellows had it all their own way, and now there are so many that the fishing don't pay the fishermen. But before the war? queried Percy. We had a gentleman here who spent his time shooting them. Shooting seals! said Hugh. Well, you see, sir, what my nets are like. We fish for the seals, and that's about all. They moved away, and whilst Mr. Williams told that the old fellow had come to the trade late in life and was not to be trusted in the Sound, the tide continued to rise over the shingle bank. A long waiting it was, but withal not a weary waiting,

for the boatmen were cheery fellows, brimming over, both of them, with local stories. All the same, Hugh and Percy were glad when the time came for them to scramble down the rocks to the boat, into which it was nearly time they should jump, for the water was now around her. Ten minutes afterwards she was afloat, with the boatmen pulling her out towards the open sea, to Hugh's surprise; so heavily was the boat built that it looked as if four oars would be needed to get My Fancy over to Ramsey Island.

My Fancy was sharp at both ends, and as if she were not heavy enough in her planks Mr. Williams had paved her with great stones, which, he said in answer to Percy's question, would keep her steady in the Sound. For we may meet a whirlpool or two, though the tide is not running yet. We shan't be long getting you over, he added. Once outside of the ness we shall catch a wind or two. An almost unfulfilled prediction this was, for although a languid air filled the sails, the sheets were never taut. The oars were out, and it was these that carried them over within sight of the boiling Sound under cliffs towering hundreds of feet above the sea and about whose base the sea prowled like a savage beast, though the day was well-nigh windless. Of landing-places there seemed to be no sign, and they sailed along the rocks watching the whirlpools. You see, the tide has begun to run, but that's nothing to what it will be in a couple of hours' time, said Mr. Williams. On our return, we shall have to make for the open sea to get above the ness, he added, words not very explicit to Hugh and Percy, who had no mind to give to them, so anxious were they to catch sight of the cove into which the boat might be run. It came at last, no more than a little gravel shore between high rocks up which they passed skilfully enough, but the boat being so heavy

a little wading had to be done through the surf. But there'll be no hurt in that, said Mr. Williams as he led them up a steep path to the door of the farmer's house, for he was bound to ask for leave to walk over the land. But the farmer had gone away to his fields, and the English language was unknown to the old Welsh woman in charge. Out of whose toothless gums issues a Welsh more fluent than Williams's, Percy remarked to Hugh, who begged him to restrain his criticism, the Welsh being very proud of a knowledge of their language.

The old woman could not tell whither the farmer had gone, or Mr. Williams could not understand her, and going in search of him they came upon the farmyard, a vast mire in which stood three or four empty byres with sagging roofs and broken doorways, a dismal spectacle from which they withdrew. And it seeming to them that to await the farmer's return would be trying their patience, Hugh proposed a visit to St. David's hermitage to Mr. Williams, who assured them that only a little heap of rubble remained of it, and they agreed to follow him towards the cliffs, where, he said, they would see the seals playing in the surf a thousand feet below them. On their way thither they would meet the farmer in one of his fields, as likely as not; and they looked into many divided by stone walls with barbed wire on top. A defence against what? asked Percy as he descended a half-bank, half-wall, with a large rent in the seat of his breeches, which Mr. Williams assured him the farmer's wife would be glad to put a stitch in when they returned, enough to take him home without indecency or ridicule up the long street of St. David's. But if I get caught again, said Percy. You mustn't do that, Mr. Williams replied, and he held the next barbed wire out of Percy's way; and they continued to make their way through fields barely cultivated, with here a little corn

and there some green stuff, cabbages or turnips, for feeding sheep. But where were the sheep? And whilst thinking of these they came upon a deserted bungalow, a handsome place, with carved chimney-pieces and, peeping through the bow windows, they listened to Mr. Williams extolling a scheme for the refurnishing of the bungalow, extending it a little, perhaps, with a view to the entertainment of paying guests, to which the farmer might or might not consent. We are nearing now, Mr. Williams said, the cliffs at the bottom of which we shall see the seals at play; and they came to a cliff of such great height that neither Percy nor Hugh dared to approach it lest their heads should whirl in a dizziness and they fall over. A drop of a thousand feet it must be to the beach, Hugh said, and to watch seals three hundred yards away we should need a glass.

Not having a glass it behoved them to turn back, and whilst Hugh was asking Mr. Williams to tell them of the hermitage and all he knew of the Saint and why the robber had murdered him, they were suddenly accosted by the farmer, who began to rate Mr. Williams soundly for taking visitors over his island without having had the courtesy to ask for permission to do so, saying: You know well enough that I never refuse; but before walking over a man's land it is only polite to—— These gentlemen, Mr. Williams began, but he did not get further than the word gentlemen, for the farmer broke in again and so fiercely that Mr. Williams turned to Hugh and said: Now, Mr. Monfert, will you tell Mr. Evans how it happened that he should find us here and not waiting at his house? It seemed to Hugh that it was not fair of Williams to throw the blame upon him in this way, if not the blame at least the task of explaining to this almost violent man why they had come upon the island; and so he shifted the blame back upon Mr.

Williams, saying that he and his friend had come over with him and that he thought Mr. Williams understood the manners of the island, what might be done and what should not be done, to which Mr. Evans listened, Hugh thought, sympathetically, certain that he was not mistaken when Mr. Evans began to tell that the island was to be sold and that he had no right to show anybody over it without an order from the solicitor. I have too much land as it is, Hugh said, to think of buying more; and at these words the farmer became affable, even friendly, and they talked together of how much money could be made out of the rabbits which were to be seen scampering in all directions. The cost of trapping rabbits and the exporting of them—the lack of a proper ferry boat, was related, as well as the price of sheep, which in the last year had fallen from five pounds a wether to three. And to remove any lingering suspicion adrift in Mr. Evans's mind regarding Percy, Hugh referred to the taking of notes (Mr. Evans had used these words), and assured him that Percy had not put pencil to paper. We do draw, but we have not done any drawings and will not do any without your permission. What should we draw? Percy asked. Not seals, for we have seen none. And when Mr. Evans had talked of the caverns, into which, Mr. Williams said, he would have the pleasure of taking them, and of the young seals that might be caught if they wished to make a pet of one, the talk wandered back to the island, to the price that it would fetch at the auction, not more than three thousand pounds, perhaps not even that.

Now, Hugh, for two thousand five hundred you can have a place whither nobody can come to worry you, and you, Mr. Evans, would have the most indulgent landlord in Europe. And he, sir, would have the best tenant in Wales. On this expression of goodwill they

became so friendly that Hugh was already beginning to hear his mother's protest against the ownership of the island, and himself saying: But, mother, the island is bought; it is mine. The bungalow, you see, sir, is in good repair. You will have rabbit-shooting and the best in the world. What do you say, Percy, Hugh asked. Two thousand pounds, or two thousand five hundred, for a retreat from Wotton Hall. . . . Well, sir, a matter like this cannot be decided in a minute, and what I would say to you is this: if you have a liking for my island, stop here for a week to think it over. Mr. Williams will bring food, clothes, blankets, and a couple of mattresses from the village, and any other things you may want. But to-night? asked Hugh, amazed at the adventure in which he found himself. To-night, sir, you will have to sleep in my house or on the hillside. Why not on the hillside, interrupted Percy, to-night and every night we are here, if the weather remains as it is? But our dinner and breakfast? said Hugh. Oh, we will cook our own food in the bungalow, Percy replied; it will be mostly fish. Now, Hugh, what do you say? And Hugh, seeing that Percy was bent upon remaining on the island, could not bring himself to say: No. You must start now or remain for the night, said Mr. Williams, for such wind as there is is against us, and it will be only by steering the boat close under the cliffs that we shall get clear of the whirlpools raging in the Sound. And to double the ness from which we started, he continued, we shall have to row out very far indeed to sea. If we miss it—well, we shall have to return through the Sound and land you by the lighthouse pier. If you remain, we shall be back again in the morning with a stock of furniture, bedding, chairs and tables, frying-pans and cups and saucers, and a good hamper of food—marmalade and jam, bread and sausages, enough to last you a week, for you'll be fishing

and will catch enough for a change of diet. Let's stay; it will be such fun, Percy whispered, and amazed at his own courage Hugh consented. Mr. Williams shook their hands, and soon after they saw the twain plying their oars, keeping close under the cliffs out of the sway of the current, and it was not till the boat passed out of sight and hearing that the lads ceased to wave their handkerchiefs, returning then to the stead, where they met a warm welcome, tea and griddle cakes, and where talk was prolonged till that gentle weariness which comes of a long day spent in the open air stole over them, and their host said: You're beginning to think of the blankets; these are what I have. And with these, Percy answered, we shall lie among the bracken cosy, like rabbits. Once more Evans and his wife protested that they had beds to offer them; Hugh might have accepted, for he doubted that sleep would come to him under the stars, and it was for Percy's sake that he followed the farmer to a sheltered coign where the bracken grew thick and tall. Anon the stars came out large and plentiful, and they lay asking each other the names of the different planets and constellations till at last Hugh heard Percy breathing like one asleep. He is asleep, he said; I must not speak again lest I wake him. A long day awaits us; I too must sleep if I can.

His fear was, as has been said, that the stars would keep him awake. It is true that he could not sleep, but the stars were not to blame. He was kept awake by a feeling which had been growing deeper day by day ever since he started out on this excursion, a feeling that he was beginning to think was happiness. All he remembered was unhappiness, in his childhood with his mother at Wotton Hall, in his boyhood at Stanislaus College, where he could make no way with his lessons, and again at Wotton Hall when he found himself at variance with

his mother. He had often asked whether his unhappiness was within or without himself, never finding an answer, for we cannot easily dissociate ourselves from the circumstances in which Fate has placed us. But now, in a sheltered coign of an almost desert island, among the bracken, it seemed as if he had come into the happiness that was his by right. A fish is happy in the water, a bird in the air, he said, and I have come into the circumstance in which I can be, perhaps, as happy as they. A sort of music seemed to fill him, a vague but intense emotion akin to music, and it was in this mood of rapture that he fell asleep. How long he had been asleep he could not tell, nor what had awakened him; but his sleep had been deep for his mind was a blank, and he sat up, frightened, trying to collect his thoughts, remembering very slowly that he was camping out with Percy on Ramsey Island. And whilst he watched a large star that purple and blue clouds swept over, leaving the star to shine as brilliantly as before, a cold, raw wind crept up from the ruffling sea, bringing with it a sleepy gull, just risen from a roost below. To resume his eternal fishing, Hugh said, and sank back among the bracken, eager to recapture sleep. It often seemed to him that he was on the verge of dropping off, but the illusory dimness cleared and anon he was wide awake, looking forward to the afternoon that he and Percy would spend together out in the bay fishing or visiting the great caverns they had heard of. The farmer in whose rugs he was lying returned to him and all the talk about the island, which he might buy for two thousand pounds, three at the most, and which would be a refuge always for him and Percy. But with the word refuge there came to him a feeling as uneasy as the wind that stirred in the clefts, and he cried: Has that happiness which was once so real that I could hear

it, almost see and touch it, gone? He tried to put back his thoughts, but thoughts will not be put back and very soon he was saying: I cannot abandon my mother, leaving her in Wotton Hall; she has been a good mother to me according to her lights; I must go back. And then all the misery began again, and feeling himself to be lonelier than the island he was upon, he cried: Why, why is my share of happiness so small? I ask for so little, and that little somehow is kept back. Again sleep fell upon him, but so lightly that he knew not whether he slept or waked, and then raising himself on his elbow he looked over the bracken to watch Percy sleeping. How calmly he sleeps, always sure of himself, he said; a painter priest, a Fra Angelico of our time. All things return to us; and he offered up a prayer that a great aspiration again catch flower in the Catholic Church.

His thoughts passed into reverie, almost into dreams, and his consciousness of himself was merged into mere sensation in the face of the brightened sky, the great star still blazing unquenched and the earth returning into shapes again of shore and cliff and field. Once more he looked over the ferns. Percy was still sleeping, and he began to think again of the young priest in Percy till a thought suddenly came, awakening him from his half-slumber. Why should not he, too, take Orders, thereby escaping from Wotton Hall and bringing twenty-five thousand a year to the Catholic Church to help religious art? Whosoever came forward with a statue or a picture, whosoever planned a New Church or a Cathedral, would be a beneficiary under his will. There was music too, the restoration of the Plain Song and the Polyphonic music of the sixteenth century. All these things he could do with his money; the money that he thought was but a hindrance would be—— His thoughts again melted into reveries, from which he was startled by

Percy calling to him. Would he tell Percy of the thoughts that had come to him between sleeping and waking? Yes; but he must wait for some quiet evening hour when the work of the day was done and Percy could give ear to his project to take Orders. It must remain a secret between them, and he asked himself if he could trust a chatterbox like Percy to keep a secret. Percy's voice again interrupted his thoughts, and he answered him that they might expect the arrival of the boatmen in an hour or more. Let us go down to the landing-stage and wait for them, Percy said, and they went and sat in the glittering September morning watching the raging Sound and the pale, cloudless skies that had not changed for many weeks. No break in the weather will happen, Hugh thought, till we leave the island. Here come the boatmen, said Percy, bringing food and blankets, mattresses too, which we shall not need, for though the nights are warm the dews are heavy; among the bracken we shall be better in our blankets. Now come and let us help to drag the boat ashore. If he is not drawing he must be always doing something, Hugh said to himself, and they went down together to help the boatmen. And the morning passed away setting up their table and kitchen in the deserted bungalow. The boatmen were hired for attendance upon them all the day, and in the afternoon Mr. Williams proposed that they should visit the caves where the seals bred. No one has ever been through them, he said, and he warned Hugh of the roaring of the great bull seals at the approach of the boat, afraid lest they should be robbed of their young.

VII

The sun was setting amid cries of innumerable sea-fowl when they returned home under a great arch of sky,

the sea extending like a mirror before them, with clusters of islands lying beyond Ramsey Island, some mere rocks, the roosts of sea-gulls, others let out to a few cottiers, those to the right belonging to —— (Mr. Williams told the owner's name) and those further away to —— (another owner was mentioned). And in answer to Percy, in whose imagination had risen a picture of life on those lonely island coasts, Hugh said! The folk are well enough in their islands, where they have pure air to breathe and the sea is at their doorways to feed them. If they migrated, which they do, unfortunately, to the mainland, they would drift into the slum of a large town, to fall to drinking, and—— Hugh stopped abruptly, not liking to mention other sins that the folk might commit if they left their shores; but the sudden silence was not noticed by Percy, who seemed to have forgotten him. Of what are you thinking, Percy? Of the fisherman, Percy answered, we saw examining his nets, saying the seal had been through them. I was thinking of a shieling by the sea with two old fishermen in it mending their nets, unsuspecting of the value of the casket that the seal had no use for. Caskets, you see, Hugh, have come up from the sea many a time, and it seems to me that the incident might be the beginning of a story, one which I would like to illustrate with drawings. Let us think of what would happen to the happy fishermen. Hugh mentioned a number of events, but as none seemed to please Percy but those he invented himself, Hugh promised to give his mind to the task, and they returned up the steep path to watch the boatmen pulling at the oars in the midst of the boisterous Sound. It is seldom that a sailing ship ventures in that Sound, said Percy. A strong wind would be needed to make way against such a tide: six miles an hour, or eight is it? and that is why sails do not come this way, I suppose. But what a lovely evening! Words

died on their lips and they stood at gaze before a glass-like sea scattered with dark islands, an almost cloudless arch of sky rising above them, and in their hearts a wonderment, almost a fear. Again they fell to talking of the baby seal they had stolen, of the fishing that awaited them, of the wild goats they had not yet seen, till the time came to lie down in the bracken and watch the day waning and the night descending, still and warm. It came with stars so beautiful that it seemed a pity to leave them, but sleep took them unawares, the night passing without their knowing it, and when they awoke there was no long waiting for the boatmen, who came and took them to the further side of the island, where they might bathe in safety so long as they did not venture far from the boat. A little adventure this bathing was, Percy going into the water from the bow of the boat, long, thin, and frail, and so beautiful in his slimness that Hugh bethought himself of some early Italian sculpture imbued with the Greek spirit, or a late Greek figure retaining some of the old Greek tradition, like the youth known as the Narcissus, advancing towards a pool of water to admire his beauty in it. And the bathing over, the nets were let down; the sails filled and the boat moved through the still water, making for the headland, it being the intention of the boatmen to fish round the western shore, bringing the boat up the Sound, not raising the nets till they reached their harbourage on the eastern side.

It was that afternoon that Hugh and Percy discovered that what seemed one island was two, a narrow channel or gutter, as the boatmen called it, dividing the southern end from the northern; and the bare chance a boat would have descending through the rocky gutter where the tide swept seemingly at ten miles an hour, was argued till Mr. Williams called to his charges to look up, and at

the top of the cliffs they caught sight of what remained of the herd of wild goats that from time immemorial had browsed upon whatever grass grew between the rocks. Hugh and Percy were told that a landing was very difficult and the height of the rocks so great that the goats lingered on, reduced occasionally when a great storm raged and carried some of the herd over the edge. The boat rounded the southern ness, and when the net was raised the fish in it were distributed between the boatmen, themselves, and the farmer, whose wife came to the bungalow and helped them to cook their share of it. Another night passed, and on the morrow Percy said he would like to devote some hours to making drawings. For never shall we see such cliffs as these again. And then another day went by helping their host in his business of rabbit-catching. They bring, so it is said, sir, three hundred a year, but I'd like to see the man who could get that much out of them. No man has ever done what he thought with rabbits, the farmer added as he put the slow ferret into the hole. Sounds came from underground. The ferret is rattling them now, said Mr. Evans, and a moment after a bunny was kicking in the net, and another and another; and at the close of day fifty brace were brought back in a wheelbarrow, to be taken that night to St. David's. To make this island pay, said the farmer, we should have to have a railway station. There are sixteen good miles, to say nothing of the Sound, between the island and Fishguard. But we'll get out another fifty brace to-morrow. And as we are leaving ourselves the day after, said Hugh, we will undertake the carriage for you, a promise for which the farmer was thankful. But it was, he said, a great disappointment to him that Mr. Monfert could not make up his mind to buy the island. It is a disappointment to me, Hugh answered, and he felt that he might have yielded

to the temptation to acquire a hermitage had he not been certain that the only way he could rid himself of his present life was to take Orders. He had not yet confided his project to Percy, the feeling being strong in him that to disclose it would distract their thoughts from the island, and it was not till after a whirling passage across the Sound that he found himself unable to withhold it any longer.

Mr. Williams, who had accompanied them from the shore lest they should miss their way, had just pointed out the road to them, saying that there was but one, and looking ahead of them they caught sight of it straggling through a meagre plain between scrub and tussocked grass, with nothing to catch the eye but a hobbled goat, a tired horse turned out after his day's work to graze, and some spires showing against the quiet evening sky. It was one of those evenings when the soul talks to itself if there be no sympathetic ear to speak into, yet in the midst of soliciting Nature a shyness sealed Hugh's lips again and again; but at last the secret broke from him, and stopping suddenly he said: Percy, I cannot return to my lonely life with my mother. Percy, who was thinking at that moment of the drawings he had done on the island, withdrew his thoughts from them and answered: How is that, Hugh? You are sympathetic, Percy, but you don't understand and I can't blame you, for your father allows you freedom to choose your life. I am going to take Orders, Percy replied, to escape from worse, my father having proposed the Indian Army to me as a profession. The Army, he said, is better paid in India, and an officer can live on his pay. As a counter to the Army I spoke to him of Orders. So he proposed an exile to you in India? Hugh said, his voice trembling with emotion as he spoke the words, and whilst he considered the lack of perception which the proposal seemed

to betray in Dr. Knight, his pricking conscience questioned Percy's lack of scruples. To take Orders to escape the Army was doubtless a great sin, and to understand Percy better, he said: But you hoped that you would discover a vocation in yourself before—— Yes, I thought of that, Percy answered indifferently, but I hoped meanwhile to be able to do something with my drawings. My father is a clever man, but without eyes to distinguish a good line from a bad, and very little sense of the different keys. You know I am deputy organist at Stanislaus, and when he sings Mass he often drops half a tone, and a nice clashing there would be if I didn't keep a close watch on his drawl. But your drawings are what interest me, said Hugh, and it seems to me that you have only to go to London to show them, to sell them and to get work. A book illustrated by you—— Ah, a book illustrated by me! That's what I have often thought I would like to do; subject pictures are not in my line, not altogether, but a decorative page attracts me—the old print of the seventeenth century, a missal, anything of that kind, and it has just struck me, Hugh, that the book about knight-errantry you spoke to me of, about Ferabras, a Saracen who went to Italy at the head of an army, not for gold or precious stones, but to rob Rome of the relics which the Crusaders had brought back from the Holy Land, would suit me. I think I could embellish it with a frontispiece, full-page drawings, and of all, tail-pieces; nothing is so fascinating as sparkling little tail-pieces.

Of course you are quite right, Percy. I wonder I didn't think of it before. Ferabras is a great story which has been adapted, mutilated, for centuries, so perhaps the time has come to return to the original story. But you haven't got it right, or I may have bungled it in the telling. The story you are thinking of, and of which

Ferabras is the hero, begins with a raid made by Charlemagne into Spain, which at that time was of course in the hands of the Saracens, with a view to recapturing the relics that they had robbed from Rome. Oliver was in command of the raiders, and at first he seems to have been successful; he pillaged and burnt every town, gathering a large booty wherever he went, till a great host of Saracens surrounded his army; but Roland and the Crusaders came to his rescue, despite their belief that they would never see the light of another day. The tide of battle turned when Charlemagne, with a reserve of hardened warriors, came to their aid. As soon as the news of the defeat reached the ears of Ferabras, he was filled with shame and anger, and calling for his horse he armed himself from head to heel and rode to where the Crusaders were encamped; and when he was near enough to be heard he raised his voice and cried that he had come to challenge Roland or Oliver in single combat, or any other Crusader who cared to accept his challenge. His words, the story tells, were like thunder in the ears of the Christians, and having spoken he dismounted, disarmed, and with insolent disdain lay down to rest himself under a tree, waiting for the champion or champions to present themselves. And all this assurance was not mere bravado, for he lacked nothing to prove himself the greatest knight on the top of the earth; he had a horse of a special breed, a carnivorous animal, a man-eater, and he had three swords like to which there were no three others in the world. But all these advantages were nothing in comparison with two little barrels which he carried on either side of the pommel of his saddle, for these were part of the relics of the Passion and were brought from Jerusalem to Rome, where they had been found by Ferabras on the expedition that he had headed against that town.

A single touch of the balm they contained would heal the most grievous wound, for the balm was the very one with which the Magdalen had anointed Jesus Christ. But you don't believe, Hugh, that Ferabras possessed two little barrels filled with—— One never knows, Hugh answered. I do not like to express opinions as to the truth of pious beliefs or practices; they do no harm and may be helpful. Christianity commits us to a belief in miracles, and who shall say that the age of miracles is ended? Ferabras had a sister of great beauty—— Yes, of course, Percy interrupted, but among the many volumes you have of that literature perhaps there's another story, a more human one, something less exaggerated.

I will try to think of one, Hugh said, and the friends continued their walk through the spare, silent country, their eyes on the Cathedral tower which rose above the valley. I dare say that no story conveys a better idea of the knightly mind than that of Ferabras, but a contrast is needed, said Percy. People will always be interested in chivalry, but they like something else besides; chivalry and nothing but chivalry would be monotonous. It may be I shall remember something that will suit you better, Percy. It would be a great pleasure to me to help you, as you know well, and I should take the same pleasure in your work as I would in my own. We both love art; you can do it, I can but love it. My dear Hugh, you are more original than any of us, Percy answered. Sometimes I think, Hugh said meditatively, that there is a self in me that belongs to me and to me alone; but I have not been lucky, though many, of course, would think that I was the very luckiest. Money is like a web; we who have it find ourselves entangled whichever way we turn; we can never be ourselves. The only thing that I am sure of is that I would escape from Wotton Hall if I could, and a little while ago the way of escape seemed

clear; now it is blocked again. How is that? asked Percy, and Hugh answered in a disappointed tone: A little while ago I was telling that I had come to a resolution to take Orders. And what prevents you from taking Orders if you are so minded, Hugh? I do not know that it would have occurred to me to take Orders if you had not set the example, Percy. I never had a friend except you, and I am not reconciled to losing you, or even part of you, which I should do if I took Orders and you remained among the laity. Art is a potent magnet. We should be drawn apart. Oh, I know it. Percy, don't you understand?

VIII

The lads had planned to leave St. David's next morning in time to catch the express from Fishguard, but the flyman had overslept himself, and the shower of gravel with which he had promised to awaken them was not thrown against the window pane till four o'clock. The express left Fishguard at five, and unless we had wings we could not have done the distance in an hour, said Percy afterwards. I am in no wise anxious to reach Stanislaus College, but to loiter here another long day is damnable. And if he should be late to-morrow! I'm not sure that it wouldn't be as well to start at midnight! Anything rather than miss the train again. But why, Hugh, do you want to go to Stanislaus College with me? I am glad of your company and I appreciate it—I know that it's very kind of you; but Stanislaus College is such a loathly place in my eyes that I can't understand how you can want to go there, and you do. You talk of becoming a priest and living there. And upon this Percy elaborated a theory that Yarrow should always remain unvisited, dwelling on the fact that our mem-

ories should never be brought into conflict with realities, there being two things in man—the moment in which he lives, and the moment that he remembers separate things, hostile as fire and water. The only circumstance in which he could understand the revisiting of Yarrow was if one had developed a grudge against Yarrow and wished to indulge in one's contempt, thereby frightening Hugh with wisdom unnatural in a healthy body. Only consumptives are thus apt, he said to himself. If I were the owner of Wotton Hall, said Percy suddenly, I shouldn't be returning to Stanislaus College. You might, Hugh replied, if you knew what my life was. But I do know, said Percy; your mother wants you to marry and you won't. I should hate the thought of passing all my life with a woman and might end by hating her. Oh, then you do feel like that, Percy? A woman by me night and day would interfere with my work. But I can't see what fault you find with your mother. To me she seems a very agreeable woman indeed. You might have suited her better than I do, Hugh muttered. And as for the women, Percy continued, that she brings down to Wotton Hall, no doubt some of the girls are very pretty, and I am sure I should be able to spend some pleasant hours with them; but no such luck for me! A great many of the women that she brings down are very vulgar, Hugh replied, but I have noticed, Percy, that although you object to vulgar, common, uneducated men, you don't mind vulgar, common, uneducated women. So long as they are women, you are satisfied.

Percy laughed and answered that the very fact of being a woman was a romance from a man's point of view. And I wonder you don't feel as I do, Hugh, for you are romantic in many ways. Yes, I know I am, said Hugh, but I am not romantic about women. I think if

you saw Beatrice you would be romantic about her, Percy replied. The first person you spoke to me about, Percy, was your sister. Is she then very wonderful? And Percy talked of her till the Church bells began to ring, and then Hugh's conscience smiting him he said: If we had only caught that train we would have arrived at Birmingham in time for Mass; we have missed Mass here. There's a holy well in the neighbourhood, said Percy; we might visit it. Hugh consented, but the visit to the holy well did not soothe his conscience and he was as unhappy after luncheon as he was before it. Percy proposed a visit to the flyman, who was apologetic, and from him they learnt the dreadful news that there was no boat train from Ireland on Sunday night and therefore no morning train to London, and the thought of another day in St. David's broke them down. But the day passed, though they thought it never would pass, and on Monday morning they were driving through the dusk to catch a later train, Hugh still thinking of the Mass that he had missed the day before and Percy of the rating he would get from his father for having remained away many days after the appointed time. It's just occurred to me, Hugh, he said, that we are both in the same boat; you don't like going to Wotton Hall to meet your mother, and I don't like going to Stanislaus College to meet my father. In the same boat and in the same train, Hugh answered sleepily, and they sat almost stupid, side by side, watching the great sky above them and the small dark patch through which they were driving, the tedium of the drive relieved a little by the torch-like splendour of the star, now and again obscured by a cloud but shining forth again always, shining as brilliantly when they arrived at Fishguard as when they left St. David's. And then the great harbour took their eyes and drew a few words from them, but

they were too sleepy, too stupid, to think any more about it.

It was now broad day and they sat in the railway carriage, Percy already anxious for talk but Hugh inert, deep in a stupor in which he saw and heard hardly anything. He was often like this, and after a few attempts at conversation Percy turned for interest to his own thoughts, and very soon began to discover himself different from what he was when he set out from Wotton Hall. St. David's, above all, seemed to have revealed much about himself that he did not know before. The attack of blood-spitting that he had had on the road after leaving the inn might mean little or much, but it seemed to foretell that his life would not be a very long one. He might live for some years still; he might even decline into old age if he became a priest and lived abroad in a climate that suited him; but of what good would that be? A few more years of life mean nothing; life consists in doing what we come into the world to do, and with care he might live for several years in England, expressing himself, for that was how he liked to think of life, as a term for self-revelation. As a priest he would be but a mummy; and his thoughts ran on that if he had hesitated till now between religion and art, it was because he did not know his own powers as an artist. But these had been revealed to him. He liked the St. David's drawings as well as any he had ever done, and overlooking them he indulged in the belief that as line, as penmanship, they exceeded in beauty any that he knew in modern times, than any, unless the miracles of the past were matched against him. All the same, he realised that they did not exhibit him fully, only his hand and some delicate observation. There was something more in him, which he would be able to get out if he managed to escape the priesthood and if a suitable

book came to him for illustration. Ferabras might be the very one; and lying back in the railway carriage his mind seemed to overflow with strange, intricate fancies, lovely embroideries that the story Hugh had told him awakened, and it seemed to him that it would be a pity if he went out of the world without giving shape to these. The story that Hugh had told him took possession of him; he saw the frontispiece and the tail-pieces and a hundred embellishments, devices of all kinds. If they want more, they shall have more, he said, carried forward on a wave of confidence. On turning to another part of the story his mind overflowed again with new imaginations, surprising him by their strangeness and their beauty, wicked, superlative things that would at once exasperate and please. Though he paid for it with his life, he must get some of himself onto paper, and though he had a weak chest he was not a consumptive; all he asked was ten years. And he looked at Hugh, saying to himself: He must do that translation for me; he is good enough for that.

He would have liked to stop at the next station and begin drawing in the waiting-room, and might have done so if his father had not been at Stanislaus waiting for him. He might shake Hugh out of his lethargy instead, for he need hear the story but once to have enough of it in his mind to make a start. But Hugh could not be shaken out of his lethargy, coma, stupor, whatever it was; he lay back inert and all Percy could get out of him was: I can't go over that story to-day, half of it is forgotten, Percy; my brain will not work. Whereupon Percy watched Hugh's great, broad face, his long, loose mouth and his vague, shifting eyes, saying: I shall get nothing out of him to-day. It is strange, he added, to lie without seeing or hearing, and yet awake.

Percy's restless mind, plain upon his thin, pale face,

was able to penetrate Hugh's almost animal indolence, now and again stirred by remembrances of Stanislaus College; the great, red-brick tower in which a bell tolled, bringing them to lessons and to play, the long, narrow passages down which he was sent to the prefect's room to be flogged, and at whose door he had to wait sometimes for an hour, trying to keep his hands warm, hoping thereby to save himself some of the pain which he would suffer from the blow of the great leathern thong. Of the narrowness of the life there, of the thin, meagre outlook, he was aware, and how pernicious its effect had been upon him, and the old grudge against his mother and Stanislaus College revived in the midst of his stupor. He recalled how he had been taught about hell, its ovens, its gridirons. He recalled these things vaguely; what he remembered best was a small book, not much bigger than a man's hand, a thin book printed on coarse paper and illustrated with long-tailed devils. The very morning that the book was given to him to read appeared in his thought: a wet, grey day it was and the hour midday. But it was not the religious instruction that he had received at Stanislaus College, nor this horrible little book that had formed his mind, giving it a bias, but a story told him by his mother when he was a baby. She was giving him the usual religious instruction, hell, of course, figuring largely in it, and he had asked her if being burnt for ever hurt as much as being burnt for a short time. He knew nothing about burning at the time, and his mother had laughed; and encouraged by her laughter he said: Is there no other punishment but burning in hell? Oh yes, she had answered, and told him a little story—that one of the punishments of hell was the hopelessness of ever getting out of hell, and so that this torment of hope might be stimulated, the damned were allowed to try to get out of hell, to

steal the keys. He had asked his mother where the keys were, and she told him of a ruined castle some miles from the main road, reached by a narrow lane, and that it was in this castle that the jailer of the damned dwelt. There was a little stream across the road over which the jailer was not allowed to pass, and the damned soul knew that if he could hit off the time when the jailer was having his dinner, he could take the keys from the nail on which they hung. The soul crawled along the little walls so that none should see him; once he had crossed the bridge he was in the power of the demon that lived in the ruined tower, and when he got under the walls of the castle his plan was to cry out: Long Hand the Guff, are you there? If he cried three times he might be sure that Long Hand the Guff was away upon some other business. But Long Hand the Guff kept a good watch and before the soul had cried out for the third time: Long Hand the Guff, are you there? the demon was out of the ruined castle, and the soul fled, knowing that if he could only reach the stream he would be safe. But every moment Long Hand the Guff would gain upon him, till at last he would feel the great arm stretching out to seize him, and just as he put his foot into the water the hand would clasp about his neck and drag him back. None had ever escaped Long Hand the Guff. If he had asked his mother what punishment Long Hand the Guff put the soul to in the ruined castle he could not remember, but the flight of the soul from the ruined castle to the brook and the coming stench of the demon upon the unfortunate soul had sunk into his mind. He knew the story was but an invention of priests to frighten people into obedience, but the knowledge that it was that and no more than that was no help, for it had become part of his consciousness, something that he would never be able to separate himself from and

which he thought had permanently injured his life. He had thought of these things so often that his thoughts could ramble on in his dream or stupor without any effort of will, and with his eyes fixed upon Percy, so different from himself, so free, so daring, with all the qualities that he knew himself to lack, he began to wonder if Percy would have outlived this story if he had been told it in his youth; and he cherished the belief that if he had not heard the story of Long Hand the Guff and others, he would be able to stand side by side with Percy, his equal. The word warped came into his mind and went out of it as the stupor deepened, and he lay for a long time without thought till they came to a station and Percy roused him.

Stafford was being cried along the platform. An hour's wait, said Percy, and from Birmingham, their destination, a hansom took them through a rolling, barren country, almost treeless till they came to the trees about Stanislaus, meagre woods through which the half-starved pupils were wont to run to a small shop called Atkins to buy cocoa, thereby risking six strokes of the ferule. Hugh recalled the shop, and his measles in the rooms over the archway, when the gatekeeper opened the great door studded with iron nails; he had spent three weeks of the term in those rooms, attended on by the gatekeeper's wife. It began to seem as if he could not go on, so hateful were his memories of Stanislaus, and if Percy had not distracted his thoughts from his school-days with the remark: It is very good of you to undertake the explanation, but what are you going to tell the Governor? (remembering, I am returning to Stanislaus a week behind my time), Hugh might have called through the roof to the driver to turn back. A moment after Percy was in the middle of a description of a storm in the Sound, saying that nothing was more

likely than bad weather, especially on the coast of Wales. I'll jump out and wait for you here, he added, near the gateway. You're not going to stay the night? No, no; I'll see Dr. Knight, fix things up if I can, and be back as soon as possible. Percy called after him that he was not to hurry, and the cab passed on through skimpy plantations up the terrace, to stop before another great door studded with iron nails under the belfry tower whose bell had clanged so often in Hugh's ears that it would never cease to clang in his memory.

Dr. Knight—is he at home? he asked. He recognised the well-known quadrangle through the leaded panes, the florid, tessellated pavement under his feet, and the stained wooden staircase with a copy of one of Murillo's Virgins and a crescent moon decorating the wall, and again he felt that Percy was right when he said that he could not understand people wishing to return to the scenes of their youth. How wonderful, he said to himself, that he should know all this; and whilst he pondered Percy's almost magical appreciations, Dr. Knight entered the room, very angry. Hugh had never seen Dr. Knight angry before, nor did he believe that the tall, lean, kindly ecclesiastic could be angry with anybody, least of all with him. Dr. Knight's words were on a par with his appearance, and Hugh was glad to drop his hand, so antagonistic did it seem. Sir, I am sorry, and will tell you how it happened. You will then know how to apportion the blame. We ventured on Ramsey Island—— But you know, Hugh, my son is studying for the priesthood, and for him not to return at the end of the vacation sets a bad example. But, sir, I haven't told you that we were dissuaded from returning by the boatmen; the Sound is often very dangerous. You'll be surprised when you see Percy's drawings, and I am sure will hardly be able to regret that the boatmen

dissuaded us. The face that was overcast brightened, and the prelate said: So Percy has not been wasting his time; he has been drawing? Oh, sir, when you see the drawings he has done of the ruined Palace—— Ruined Palace! the prelate repeated, and Hugh broke into the story of the destruction of St. Mary's College during the Reformation, passing on to the Bishop's Palace that was unroofed so that the five daughters of Bishop Barlow might marry five Bishops. Five daughters marry five Bishops! Dr. Knight said, his kindly temper having returned to him, and Hugh told him of the many laughs he and Percy had had about the five sons-in-law. So Percy has done some beautiful drawings? I shall be glad to see them. And you will not be too hard upon him? Hugh pleaded, for truly, Dr. Knight, the fault is mine. I didn't like the look of the Sound, and—— Well, well, send Percy to me.

If you could give me a few minutes more of your time, sir, I should be glad, for I have something important to say, important to myself. You remember my telling you when you were at Wotton Hall my mother's dread lest I might be drawn to the priesthood? Dr. Knight answered that he had not forgotten, and Hugh continued: You asked me if I had ever spoken to my mother on the subject, and I think I said that I had not, that I just wished to be allowed to live my life naturally, without being poked on to do something I didn't want to do, at least not just then. Yes, Hugh, I remember. Well, sir, I have now come to tell you that I think I have discovered a vocation for the priesthood in myself. I am not sure—— My dear Hugh, you have not seen your mother since I left you at Wotton Hall (you and Percy left her the next day, I believe), and any inclination you may have developed since then for the priesthood can be no more than an inclination that may pass from you as

quickly as it came. Was it association with Percy that put the thought into your mind? No, sir, I don't think it was. Percy's example may have been a motive, but I have always wished to do something for my Church. You can be of greater advantage to the Church as a layman than as a priest. It may be as you say, sir. Of course it all depends, Hugh, upon the call, if it be a true call and not a fancy. In six months' time or a year, if you wish to take Orders I shall be glad to help you in any way in my power. Are you stopping with us for the night? No, sir, I must return to London. Send Percy to me. I'll send him, sir; he is waiting to say good-bye to me in the plantations, and I'll not delay. I will tell him to come to you at once.

IX

The cab stopped, and Percy, who was having tea with the gatekeeper and his wife, came from the lodge and asked Hugh if he had made it all right with his father. We will talk of that presently, Hugh answered, and when the cab had passed out into the high road, he said: Your father was very angry at first, and I thought all the fat was in the fire, as we used to say at school; but I cracked up your drawings and very soon his face recovered its benignity. I suppose my father is benign now he's a priest and will be more so when he's a bishop. So he wants to see my drawings? Well, I'll go and show them to him. And you won't forget the story of Ferabras? As soon as I get the translation I'll begin to plan my pictures. He sprang from the footboard, crying from the hedge-bottom: But there was another story about a great count who warred against the King of France. You haven't forgotten? Hugh tried to collect his thoughts, but the cabman whipped up his horse, and all the way to Birmingham Hugh searched his memory

for the story of a count who was defeated after long years of struggle, but his mind refused to work, which was not strange: he had been on the road since three in the morning, and so heavy were his eyelids that he must have fallen asleep soon after he settled himself in the railway carriage, for of the journey he remembered only that he was roused by a ticket collector. After having had his ticket punched, he dropped asleep again as soon as the door was shut, and slept on till the train reached London, and learning at Liverpool Street that there was no late train out he was minded to telegraph for his carriage. Of what use to keep horses eating their heads off in the stables? Excellent logic, but he spent the night at an hotel.

Next day he journeyed to Essex and the emblazoned carriage that met him at the station reminded him of the delightful days when he and Percy walked from inn to inn, knapsacks on their backs, free from all care, back in a younger world that Time had left long behind. Are these happy days gone by, never to return? he asked himself. Can anything return? Nothing returns as it was. Life's pleasures only exist once; its tedium is always with us: the silk-lined carriage, the liveried servants, the shining horses, and in a few minutes passages will appear hung with Venetian pictures, furnished with gilt console tables, and many various saloons opening one into the other, long reaches of pale roses and the purple architecture of Aubusson, my monumental butler, and my watchful valet. As he drove from the station he foresaw all Wotton Hall save the young girl whom he caught sight of sitting with his mother. This is Beatrice, she said, Percy's sister, and Hugh recognised Percy in Beatrice without being able to say in what feature—a certain cast of countenance, mayhap. Percy's cheeks were thin; Beatrice's face was almost full, and

it cannot be denied that the words: a full oval, would rise up in the mind of whosoever sought to describe her. If the eyes are not like, there is no likeness worth speaking of, and Beatrice's eyes were not obviously like Percy's; Percy's were more plaintive, the whites were larger, yet it was in Beatrice's smaller eyes that Hugh read Percy. Percy was pale, white; Beatrice showed a brown face. She was, if anything, taller than her brother, and though Percy's talk pierced through hers, her talk was less bracing; and seeking for a simile, Hugh said to himself: The atmosphere of the valleys compared with that of the hill. He was not carried away at first sight, and missed a great many of the wonders he had been told he would find in her. It's always a misfortune, he admitted to himself, to hear much about anybody before seeing them, for one is prejudiced more by praise than blame, and there's nothing for one to discover for oneself; we are merely critical of our authorities.

It was whilst thinking these thoughts that Hugh felt his mother's eyes upon him, and so it came to him to say to himself: She shall not accuse me of prejudice; and to convince her that he was of a free mind he proposed that Beatrice should help him with the translation of *Ferabras*. *Ferabras?* said Mrs. Monfert. A book of knight-errantry, Hugh answered, that I promised Percy to translate for him; he thinks it will suit his style. And he began to tell his mother of the drawings that Percy had done among the ruins of the Bishop's Palace. After listening for some time Mrs. Monfert mentioned that Beatrice knew Provençal. A mere smattering, Mrs. Monfert, only enough to read *Mireille*, the last great poem come out of Southern France. Beatrice added that it was written, of course, in modern Provençal, but Mistral had translated his poem into the Provençal of

some distant century—maybe the thirteenth; of that she was not sure. In the book she had read there was a second translation into modern French, and she had been curious to compare them. A piece of great good fortune this seemed to Hugh, who was eager to hear how much Provençal Beatrice knew, and if she wished to enlarge her knowledge. As these questions could not be discussed in front of Mrs. Monfert, he invited her to the Barn. In the Barn, he said, they would have the books before them, Beatrice acquiesced, and apologising to his mother for taking Beatrice away from her (an apology altogether unneeded, Mrs. Monfert being delighted that he should do so), they went up the great and the little staircase together. So this is where you live, said Beatrice, viewing almost with alarm the beams, white-wash, and the suits of ghostly steel worn by men long whiles ago. I think I should feel frightened sitting here late lest the knights might come back and claim their helmets and swords and greaves and breast-plates and—but now I am at the end of my knowledge of armour. Hugh mentioned many more names to her, and he explained how the visor was worn and the use of the little hammer that the knight carried by his side, saying that when a knight was overthrown the weight of his armour prevented him from rising; his adversary would then approach him and kneel down to punch solemnly a hole in the armour with his spiked hammer, and when the hole was large enough, the sword did the rest. Oh, how frightful to kill a man when he was down!

There was much more to be said about armour, but Hugh guessed that Beatrice had no interest in the subject, and at that moment he had very little himself, being eager to talk about Percy. It is a piece of good luck, he said, that you should know Provençal. Know Provençal! But, Mr. Monfert, I never said I did. After reading

Mireille in French I read it in Provençal, because one of the teachers came from Arles; the books of knight-errantry are not written in modern Provençal but in the Provençal of the thirteenth century, which is no doubt quite different. I am sure I shall not be able to translate a sentence. Well, we shall soon know, said Hugh returning from his bookcase, for here is the celebrated story of Ferabras, written in the thirteenth or the fourteenth century, I have forgotten which. And laying the book open before Beatrice he waited, saying that it would not be reasonable if the Provençal she had read in Mireille varied from the ancient language more than Chaucer did from modern English, or Dante from modern Italian; and whilst she scanned the pages, hoping to find a sentence she could translate, he watched her face, thinking how surprised Percy would be if he could see them sitting together and how pleased he would be that they should waste no time but go to work at once, which they would do as soon as they acquired sufficient knowledge of the language it was written in. I understand a little, she said, but will understand much more at the end of the week, enough to check your translation. But do you think that a book so dependent for its interest on the ideas of mediæval France would find readers to-day? Percy raised the same objection, Hugh answered; he would like the story of Gérard de Rousillon, I think, better for that very reason. It's a more human story, but I think Ferabras would lend itself more to his drawings, and the text is, after all, only a peg on which to hang his drawings. But do you think, Beatrice asked, that Percy is at present old enough—— Has enough command of his talent? Hugh interjected. Indeed I do.

And the girl sat listening, her long thin hand (so like Percy's, Hugh thought) laid upon the open book, her

eyes awake like Percy's when a thought flashed into her mind. Her thoughts do not move so quickly as his, he said to himself, but they move; and he continued to praise the drawings that Percy had made, taking note of the intellectual stir upon her face, a flushed face, shadowed with bright brown hair. A prettier face than Percy's not so thin, but of the same cast of countenance, he thought during a pause that had fallen upon them. You have seen him draw then? Beatrice asked. Seen him draw? Hugh answered. Whilst we were away he did nothing else but draw. You left here at daybreak, didn't you? she said, and Hugh burst into loud laughter. Yes, he answered, leaving a letter for mother that must have made her very angry, for a number of people were coming down for the week-end, and mother's visitors are—— He stopped, his wits overturned by the thought that he could not with propriety discuss his mother's visitors with Beatrice, whom he hardly knew. But what to say next he did not know, and to complete the confusion of the moment he asked Beatrice if she thought that Percy would become a priest. Percy must adopt some profession, she answered. Father wanted him to go into the Army, but he is not strong enough to live in a regiment, nor is his mind such a one as would find sympathy among soldiers. He would indeed be an exile among the commonplace that goes to the making of our excellent soldiers, whereas I can imagine him easily as an eighteenth-century Abbé. But we are not in the eighteenth century, Hugh said, and she continued as if she had not noticed the reproof, saying that she could see Percy chaplain in the mansion of a great French noble—a mansion in which there was an organ—and that perhaps he had as much talent for music as for drawing, Hugh taking a different view. In his mind there could be no doubt in what direction Percy's talent lay, and

for him to put aside his drawing and take up music merely because a living would come to him more easily as a priest than as an artist, would be a great misfortune, one that he (Hugh) could not bring himself even to consider. I look forward, he said, to an exhibition of his drawings in London. I shall, of course, be a large purchaser of *Ferabras*, the book which we were going to do together. I'm sure it's very good of you, Beatrice murmured, and they stood looking at each other, thinking of Percy but not daring to speak the thoughts that were in their minds, for they both knew that it was not certain if Percy's health would allow him to live in England. After a few seconds it was necessary to say something, and because he could not think of anything else Hugh said: So mother told you that we went away at daybreak, leaving a letter? Anything else? No, Beatrice answered, she just said that. I only arrived this morning and have had very little talk with her, for which she apologised. But I told Mrs. Monfert that she could rely upon me to find plenty of things to interest me; I am always happy with a book in the library. She said that she expected you back in a day or two, that was all. My mother, as I told you, was expecting visitors when we went away, Hugh said, and relied upon us to entertain them. I don't mind telling you that it was to escape her visitors, a somewhat scratch lot, you know, that we left; and taking pleasure in the story, Hugh told her how they had jumped into a train not knowing whither they were going, paying the ticket collector for the tickets and begging him to say nothing as to the destination of the train. We hopped out of the train when we were tired of it and hopped into another. And who was it, Beatrice asked laughing, who started this eccentric journey? Why, Percy of course, but you mustn't tell my mother so. And what happened then?

He told her of the walking tour through the dry autumn weather, one sunny day leading into another, their bourne the next inn. We never allowed ourselves to make plans, he said; and then his face suddenly changing from gay to grave, he began the story of the strange adventure that had befallen them at The Merry Fiddlers and the doctor's diagnosis. He said that Percy should live as much as possible in the open air, Hugh added, and that was why we slept every night on Ramsey Island wrapped up in blankets among the bracken under the stars.

What a spirited pair! Beatrice remarked. Well, it was all Percy's invention; and seeing that it pleased Beatrice to hear the story of their sojourn on the island, he told her of the fishing, the bathing, the wild goats, the great caverns into which they penetrated, the breeding place of hundreds of seals, and of the baby seal they had taken away in their boat. Poor little chap, he cried bitterly, the parent seals following us all the way, for they knew that the baby was in the boat and the baby knew that his parents were coming behind. And what did you do with him? Beatrice asked. Well, you know, seals become very tame, but as I was not going to buy the island we put him down on the shore; his father and mother flapped their way up to him and nosed him into the water. But he couldn't cross the terrible Sound, could he? There was no need that he should; the seals keep under the rocks where there is very little current. They got him back safe enough. And Percy was well all that time? Yes, quite well. I think when you see the drawings that he did among the ruins of the Bishop's Palace and the cliffs of Ramsey Island you will agree with me that he is more an artist than a musician. He cannot be as much one as the other; there's always a bias. And then he spoke of the sketches Percy had

made whilst listening to the story of Ferabras. Wonderful, wonderful! Something all his own, a magical touch. A purfled coat drawn by Percy is more beautiful than the original; his pencil adds beauty to the most beautiful things. But he is impatient; his last words to me were that I was to hurry on with the translation, quite forgetting that I don't know the language. But men of genius are endowed with an instinct, and I suppose he knew that you were coming here, knew instinctively, I mean, a premonition. However, there it is. We have to do this, Miss Knight. May I call you Beatrice? Of course you may, she answered. And Percy is now at Stanislaus College? Going to be a priest, Hugh answered, and they talked for a long time of Stanislaus College and Dr. Knight, Hugh telling that her father was the friend who had brightened his schooldays, and Beatrice asking many questions about her father that Hugh answered as best he could, and of these questions he remembered nothing; as soon as he had answered them, they passed out of his head, question and answer. But he remembered always one thing that Beatrice said: Father is intelligent and so was mother, but quite different from us, and I don't think they ever understood how it was that they had managed to bring into the world two such beings, for they looked upon us as quite wonderful even when we were little children. As a hen thinks of two little ducklings that have just broken their shells and made their way straight into the water, to her great fear and dismay, Hugh said.

Beatrice smiled and sat thinking, for this image seemed to convey perfectly to her the minds of her parents as she remembered them. A gong sounded through the house, and a few minutes afterwards Hugh's valet came into the Barn, a can of hot water in his hand. Dinner will be ready a little earlier to-night than usual, sir.

X

At the end of a fortnight Hugh and Beatrice began to speak of having broken through the first line of defences. We are not in the citadel, far from it, Hugh said, but we have gained a footing, I think; and they fell to talking of the translation they would make of *Fera-bras*, if Percy did not choose the adventures of *Gérard de Rousillon*. Whichever story appealed to him they would translate freely—a free translation was what was needed, not a pedantic rendering; but to accomplish even a free rendering of the story they must at least capture a little more of the language; for this end an old gentleman was discovered who would come down from London to teach them, and one evening as they were talking together of to-morrow's lesson Mrs. Monfert warned them that they would have to telegraph to their teacher to postpone his coming, for she had asked several people to luncheon the next day. More visitors! Hugh whispered to Beatrice. The habit has gained upon her. We seldom have two consecutive days to ourselves. Next morning Hugh said: Now, what would Percy do on an occasion like this? Would he endure the tedium of many hours of small talk? I think he'd run away into the woods, Beatrice answered. Well, let us do the same, said Hugh. Bringing our luncheon with us, Beatrice interjected, books, pencils, and writing paper; we can work as well in the woods as in the Barn. Mother will be very angry, Hugh replied, but it can't be helped.

You will not be late for luncheon? Mrs. Monfert cried after them from one of the windows, and the truants waved their hands in evasive reply; and delighting in their truancy they turned from the long reach of avenue into a quiet wood and followed a path of green twilight into which the sun's rays never entered, a delicious little

path, twisting through great hornbeams, and putting into the mind the thought that to walk in it was a gain and happiness. It struggled at last out of its seclusion into a glade, and hard-by was a gate leading into the high road, ascending abruptly and overhung with the park trees, through which it was pleasant to look; and Beatrice wondered why it was that Hugh should like better a seascape than these bosky corners of a park full of withering grasses and flowering willow weed. We agree in many things, she said, but I like Essex, its sluggish streams followed always by willow trees, and I like to look down into these dingles, and wonder why we do not spend more of our time amongst them. We spend too much of our time in houses, Hugh answered; happiness is found in the open air, under trees or upon cliffs, I am not certain which. And conscious that happiness was leading them, they turned off the high road, and passing by the cottages in which the Hall servants lived they entered another wood traversed by deeply rutted roads, ruts dating back to the time when a great many trees were felled for timber. In winter, Hugh said, these roads are filled with muddy pools. Now it is like walking over rubble heaps. The shooters station themselves along these roads (if they can be called roads), and crumple up the pheasants as they pass over the tops of the trees, if they be good marksmen. A great many trees had been taken away; the wood was thin and at every few yards were the stumps of the felled trees. My mother sold a great deal of timber, too much, Hugh said, during my minority, for her hope was to save a good deal of money for me so that I might be able to rebuild Wotton Hall without feeling it. I can see that a good many trees are gone, but it is still a pleasant wood, Beatrice answered, with enough shelter from the sun. And having followed the brick-hard road for several hundred

yards, they came in sight of a clearing with a house in it. The keeper's, Hugh said, and they had not gone much further when three or four long-bodied, white-haired terriers started barking. My mother's dogs! And Beatrice began to wonder if Hugh begrudged his mother a dog. But if she mentioned the subject, he would only answer: One dog, two dogs, but why so many dogs? so she let the matter go by without putting any questions, certain that it was well to restrain her curiosity and keep in mind the old adage, not to put your fingers between the bark and the tree; so she had not been much troubled with Mrs. Monfert's grievances, only a little whining lament occasionally when they were alone, and a few grunts from Hugh when she found herself alone with him.

There's grass and shade a little way down the hillside under the larches, Hugh said, interrupting her thoughts; some rain has fallen lately and the grass has sprung again. And they lay down to talk, their thoughts beguiled by the view of a bare, open country that showed through the screening trees, fading into blue woods and distances. Like a tapestry, said Hugh, almost as empty of life. You don't like tapestry? Beatrice asked. Yes, I do, he answered, in a way. But only in a way, she said, as you like women. Hugh said that he could hear his mother in that remark, and Beatrice was sorry for having made it. You mustn't judge me by what my mother tells you about me. I would sooner that you take me just as you find me, as Percy did. She had no talk with Percy, so I had a fair chance. But we always take ideas from one another; nobody is unprejudiced, Beatrice answered. You came to me prejudiced in my favour; we shouldn't have got on so well as we did, at least not so quickly, if you hadn't known Percy first, or if you had not found a

great deal of Percy in me. But that is not extraordinary, replied Hugh; it is a compliment, I think, for it shows that I am true to type. I like a certain style. Why should I like Percy and then like you if you were absolutely different from Percy! If I did, I should be among those who have no taste at all. A man's course must be guided by some fixed principle; it shouldn't be zig-zag; he must have a style, in other words, preferences. I know that if Dante had not met Beatrice he would have found another who would have suited his purpose equally. We bring our characters into the world, and it would seem that character is Fate; yet our lives depend upon circumstances; from the moment we come into the world we are being moulded, and the more we think about it the less we understand. In all we see and hear and think we find ourselves beset by contradictions. Beatrice answered to all this that things are led up to, adducing the famous example of Romeo who was in love with Rosalind for three acts, saying that we love those in whose company we are thrown, a view which Hugh could not accept, replying that we love those we are drawn to by a similarity of ideas and tastes. Were it not so, he continued, we should be as animals, whose love is merely seasonal; but in man love is not altogether physical. Not in woman, Beatrice answered, but it is in man, for whereas there are many instances of women having married men who had lost a limb in war, not loving them less because they had but one arm to clasp them with, there are no stories of men who married one-legged women for their intelligence. The highest love of all, Hugh said, his face becoming suddenly grave, is man's love of God. And it is woman, Beatrice answered, who says: Thy people shall be my people, thy God shall be my God, proving that woman is more absorbed in her

love than man is in his, for she can renounce her religion so that she may unite herself more completely to the man she loves. To a man it matters little if he goes to one church and she goes to another, but it matters a great deal to a woman. It may be that a woman is too much absorbed in her love and makes herself wearisome by it. A certain clash is necessary, Hugh answered, and it may be better for them to go to different churches. But the words had barely passed his lips when he began to fear that he was guilty of a heresy, and withdrew them, saying: The Church holds a different view, and as I have accepted the Church as my guide my opinions change accordingly. What about zig-zag? asked Beatrice. There's no zig-zag, he answered; I accept the Church. At which Beatrice laughed and began to speak of a letter she had received that morning from Percy.

A letter from Percy! May I read it? Of course you may; and after glancing through it, Hugh said: I can see that Pater's argument still rankles in him. It was I who told him that Pater looked upon the love the troubadours bestowed on women they had never seen as but an off-shoot of the cloister; for the cloister, Pater says, had never tried to suppress love, rather to increase it by the substitution of the invisible for the visible. From women to saints and angels, Beatrice interjected. Yes, Hugh replied, from earth to heaven; and what had been fostered in the cloister was transferred to the castle. But, Hugh, said Beatrice, do you think that mankind will ever be satisfied with a love that is wholly spiritual? Is it not true that many troubadours—— Sudden fallings away from the ideal matter nothing, Hugh interposed, so long as the ideal is not lost sight of, and I maintain against Percy that Pater is right. Pater's argument is so ingenious, Bea-

trice answered, that I wonder Percy doesn't accept it. In his allusion to it there is a hostility. Hostile he certainly is, said Hugh, to the remoulding of our beliefs regarding the troubadours. The movement is so picturesque and so intimately concerned with himself, his artistic self, I mean; you see, Percy is composed of two different people; he is going to be a priest—— Do you think so? interjected Beatrice. One never knows what will happen until it has happened, Hugh answered. Percy's objection to Pater's theory is instinctive; he would not have the troubadours owe anything to the Church. Beatrice suggested that such stubbornness almost presupposed an alternative theory. Oh yes, there's an alternative theory, Hugh replied. He does not deny that a great many troubadours loved women they had never seen, and that the idealism which certainly prevailed—— How did he explain it? Beatrice asked. He would connect it with the philosophy of the time. Plato was much read in the twelfth century and so was Aristotle, and from these two philosophers the Middle Ages developed two distinct currents of thought—Realism and Nominalism. The Realists derived from Plato, for they held that humanity had a separate existence apart from men and women, that it was an essence which was distributed, each individual getting his and her share of it. But the Nominalists were of opinion that humanity was merely a word, a mode of speech, a mouthful of breath (that was the expression they used about generic terms), and that we should know nothing about humanity if there were no men and women. The extreme Realists argued that humanity would exist independently of men and women. Another example will perhaps help you to understand: the Nominalists said that it was impossible to think of white except in connection with an

object. And did men waste much time over such subtleties? she asked. For two centuries at least Nominalism and Realism interested men more than anything else. Percy would say that all modern thought was born of these discussions and that the modern world owes everything to the twelfth century. But how did the rival philosophies explain the troubadours? The troubadours, you see, Beatrice, were the Realists. They sought women in the abstract, the ideal woman, not the individual. And Hugh began to cite instances, and when he had come to the end of all the known examples, Beatrice said: Well, Percy's explanation seems as good as another. But how does Percy think of all these things? she added. Was there ever before, or will there ever be again, another boy like Percy? He seems to know life at eighteen, how it is made. We observe; he knows. Percy is very wonderful, no doubt, Hugh replied, my admiration for his genius never ceases; but his knowledge of the Realists and the Nominalists could be derived from any textbook. He has read philosophy at Stanislaus, some at any rate, and he is very quick. The troubadours he picked up from me; I don't think he knew anything about them three weeks ago. Now they are all his own; to hear him talk one would think that he had been one in some anterior existence.

You know, said Beatrice, I am not certain to which side I lean, whether the idealism of the troubadours was an off-shoot of the cloister, or of Plato's philosophy. What causes you to hesitate? Hugh asked, and she answered: The book that we are going to translate for Percy. I thought we were going to translate Ferabras, said Hugh. You haven't read the last of his letter; he inclines to the story of Gérard de Rousillon, and was not the object of the poet to contrast an ideal

and an earthly love, his intention being clearly to exalt the earthly love above the spiritual? I should have said it was all the other way, Beatrice. But, my dear Hugh, you haven't read the story properly. I have told it to you in fragments, and I think you will see when you read it that the heroine of the story is not the spiritual wife of Gérard but his earthly wife. Gérard and the Emperor of France married two sisters, the wife of the Emperor contracting a spiritual marriage with Gérard with the consent of her husband and her sister, and her sister devoting herself to Gérard's welfare without fear during the years the Emperor waged war against him. And when Gérard was finally defeated, his earthly wife followed his miserable fortunes into a forest, wherein they met different hermits whom they consulted, and where they lost all their possessions, horses, armour, equipment, and the remnant that remained true to Gérard. A price was set upon the heads of Gérard and his wife, who journeyed through Europe, pursued by their enemies (Percy is right in this, the story of the pursuit is well told). They demanded refuge from the King of Hungary, but he bade them depart from his dominions, and they wandered back through countries devastated in the wars between Gérard and the Emperor, hearing in every village the Comte Gérard de Rousillon denounced as the accursed one. No words were too bad for him: Satan, Antichrist, Nero, and men turned aside to spit when his name was mentioned. And now comes, said Beatrice, the part of the story that would inspire Percy, and might even tempt readers to reconsider this well-nigh forgotten tale: Gérard's appeal to his wife that they should pass out of the memory of men, not through death but by accepting work from a charcoal burner. And for twenty years Gérard journeyed be-

tween the forest and the town, carrying heavy sacks; but at the end of twenty years some knights gave a tournament to which all the town flocked, Gérard and his wife among the onlookers, and the sight of this great display of arms moved them to return to Paris, where Gérard met his spiritual wife in a chapel, who listened to his prayers and ultimately obtained his pardon from the Emperor. What I have told you is but a crude summary of the story, yet in my summary it must be plain that the intention of the poet was to place the real wife above the spiritual wife. Even in the Middle Ages men did not forget altogether to love life and to honour it, and without his real wife Gérard would have perished utterly.

I suppose the story can be taken both ways, Hugh answered, but the morning is passing, and if we do not set to work at once we shall have nothing to show the Professor when he arrives to-morrow. And undisturbed by the rustlings, the patterings, the melancholy fall of a leaf, by the little noises that break the silences of a wood, they worked on for nearly two hours, till at last they could bear the strain no longer, and rising to stretch his legs, Hugh remarked that the hour of luncheon must have gone by without their perceiving it. Beatrice welcomed the suggestion; she admitted she was beginning to feel hungry. Hugh fetched two glasses from the game-keeper's house, and they were in the middle of their luncheon when voices were heard. Here is mother bringing her luncheon party to see the dogs, said Hugh. Shall we hide? I know a path by which we can escape them. But while Beatrice hesitated, unwilling to dodge her hostess, Mrs. Monfert spied the truants and came towards them, telling as she came that Hugh and Beatrice were translating a romance of old Provence into English; Percy, Beatrice's brother, whose talent as an

illustrator Hugh set above any man of his own time, was going to do the illustrations. Oh, how interesting! the guests cried, and may we not hope to hear what you have written this evening? We have only finished a few fragments, Hugh answered. Are you not coming back to luncheon with us? asked Mrs. Monfert. Our luncheon is over, mother. Mrs. Monfert's face darkened for a moment; it was disappointing to have all her guests left on her hands, but that mattered little in comparison with her son's marriage, which she and her visitors foresaw. Her face lit up and she was again all amiability and good humour. The keeper coming from his cottage with a number of dogs at his heels diverted the attention of the guests from the romance of old Provence, and ten minutes afterwards the guests and their hostess were on the way back to Wotton Hall, leaving Hugh and Beatrice to return to their work. But their interest in it was broken. There's a badger come up from the forest, the keeper said; he has no earth, and if he delays to return to the forest the hounds will get him when they meet. Let us go away and explore, said Hugh; who knows, we may come upon this denizen of the woods. And after telling how the badger might be beguiled back into the forest to his earth, the keeper knowing of no means whereby this might be done, Hugh and Beatrice proceeded into the wood, sustained by the very faint hope that they might catch sight of this shy and nocturnal animal.

XI

Now is this not an exquisite touch, Beatrice? he asked: Knights, said Floripar, will you pledge your word to me the service that I claim from you in front of Charlemagne? Yes, said Roland, and I speak for all. What do you wish? I ask for a husband, she continued, a knight brave and

beautiful under arms. His name is Guy of Burgundy. You have what you ask, replied Roland; here is Guy of Burgundy, three steps from you. Let us be betrothed at once, knight, said Floripar, without waiting for a word from Guy, never believing that he would refuse. Guy, taken aback by such unexpected good fortune, would have liked some time given to him for deliberation, but he dared not vex a Princess whose mind was so clearly made up, and who might order his hanging and that of his companions. And Roland, taking the fair one and the knight by the hand, betrothed each to the other in all seriousness. And this betrothal ends, said Hugh, with a touch that nobody but a man of genius could have found: Floripar, who had not tried to disguise the violence of her love, but showed it almost wantonly, said: God be praised! Now I have him whom I love better than all the world, and for whom I will accept baptism. On these words she passed her hands about his neck and pressed him to her, but she did not dare to kiss him, despite her desire to do so. Can you guess why, Beatrice? I am afraid I cannot, the girl answered. Because she was still a Pagan, Hugh said. But would that keep a woman from kissing a man if she loved him? Beatrice asked, and he answered that Floripar's restraint was a fragrant innocence, a sort of lavender-like shyness—Very different from, what shall I say, the usual onion. I am sorry, she said, that I fail to realize your high ideals. My dear Beatrice! he cried. Her smile reassured him, and they continued to translate, Hugh almost miserable in the memory of his words; he desired a reconciliation more conclusive than a smile, and there were moments when he thought he would like to kiss her. At last the roar of the gong roused him from his brooding, and all the evening he took pleasure in the mien and motion of her body under her dress. He was caught at dawn in

dreams, and all next day he sought to keep forbidden thoughts from his mind, thoughts of Beatrice and Percy—very often he could not tell of which he was thinking, and in his dreams they were often by him, singly and together. Every day he let his opportunities pass and they were many, for Mrs. Monfert never missed a chance to leave them alone; and each time she left the room she expected to hear on her return that they were engaged. In sending him to the Hunt Ball with Beatrice her plan was to provoke rumours of an approaching marriage, for as soon as these rumours came to Hugh's ears he would be obliged to consult her. He is timid, she thought; he is afraid to take the step and will never take it if left to himself. But he may be pushed over the brink.

I don't know, mother, he said one day, if you have heard a rumour, only a rumour, that some busybodies have set going, that—well—that—— That you are engaged to Beatrice? she anticipated. So you have heard it? Of course I have heard your names mentioned together. How could it be otherwise? Have you forgotten the day we came upon you picnicking by yourselves and how embarrassed you were? I was not embarrassed, mother. We only went into the woods so that we might work undisturbed at the translation we are making of Gérard de Rousillon. But do you think she ought to remain here any longer? If it gets into the newspapers—— I have heard a great deal about the chivalry of the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, Hugh; the name of Sir Galahad has been dinned into my ears; but anything less chivalrous than your question it would be difficult to imagine. That he should have acted unchivalrously towards Beatrice stung him to the quick, and he said: Of course, mother, if you think that my duty to Beatrice—— Duty isn't the word that's in my mind, Hugh. Your attentions to Beatrice have become a matter

of common gossip and your names may be coupled together in the newspapers. Honour, not duty, is the word I should use. She could see that the word had stung him, and sure that she had gained her end she refrained from further words. I dare say you are right, mother, he said, and stood gazing at her, uncertain what to say next. Footsteps were heard coming towards them, and a moment after Beatrice appeared between the pillars; but seeing that her host and hostess were engaged in private conversation, she said: I only came to fetch a book. My dear Beatrice, you have arrived opportunely, Hugh answered; we were talking about you, regretting the indiscretions of our friends, who have coupled our names together and spoken of an engagement. I say regretting, Beatrice, for they may be mischief-makers, or else—— and he stood trying to find words. I do not understand, Hugh, Beatrice answered. Well, it's simple enough, Beatrice. We are being talked about, and an announcement of our engagement may appear at any moment in the papers; and if such an announcement should appear, I will, of course, deny it—— if you wish it. If I wish it? Beatrice said. I should only be too happy, Beatrice, that the papers should publish our engagement. I am a little confused, Hugh. What answer am I to make to this? Mrs. Monfert, will you tell me? If you and Hugh like each other, there can be only one answer to make, Mrs. Monfert answered. Hugh was about to speak to you privately about the matter; he was talking it over with me first, for he was not certain what answer you would give. Then you came into the room unexpectedly, opportunely, too, and being overcome he spoke to you at once. Overcome! Beatrice said, her face lighting up. As well he might be, Mrs. Monfert replied. Well, Beatrice, what is your answer? Hugh asked. Is it to be or is it not to be? Hugh, you

do not give Beatrice any time for consideration, Mrs. Monfert interposed, and then regretting her words, as if they were an indiscretion, she said: I suppose you both know your minds. If Hugh likes me well enough, Beatrice began,—— I shall never like anybody half as well again, and he took her in his arms and kissed her on the cheek. And when Mrs. Monfert rose and clasped her future daughter-in-law in her arms, saying: Beatrice, Beatrice, you have made me very happy, Hugh spoke of some letters he had to write. And leaving his mother and Beatrice seated on the sofa, wearing, it seemed to him, a triumphant air, he hurried along the passages to the Barn, where he stood contemplating the valley and the ascending hills, unable to think or even to see, with one cry in his head, like a cicada in a lime: The step is taken, the step is taken, the step is taken; the cry varied a little: There's no going back, there's no going back; and again it was varied: Your life is fixed, your life is fixed. Then awaking suddenly, as from a painful dream, he said: If I am to catch the last post I must write at once to Dr. Knight.

MY DEAR DR. KNIGHT,—It will surprise you to read this letter, but your surprise in reading it will not be greater than mine is whilst writing it, for it brings you the news that Beatrice has consented to be my wife. You will not, I think, raise any objection to our marriage. To write: I think you will not raise any objection, seems presumptuous, but I cannot forget that we have been friends always. You were kind to me when I was a little boy at school, and the only note of happiness in my schooldays was you, as I think I have told you. You were kind enough to come down here when I asked you to settle some differences that had arisen between my mother and myself, differences now happily settled if

you do not withhold your consent. That you will give it I hope, and am writing to you out of a full heart to tell you that this engagement came about gradually, without us being aware of any change in our mutual sympathy, as we sat at a table translating an old romance for Percy to illustrate. Beatrice is cleverer than I am at languages, and after working together for two or three hours in the Barn we went for walks in the woods, talking of everything that came into our minds, but always returning to our work, which Percy's genius will illustrate. We thought always of Percy, and the book will be a sacred book for us in the future. We owe our happiness to it, and a copy printed on vellum and illuminated by Percy himself will always be on the table before our eyes, lest we should forget how much we owe to him. For had it not been for this book Beatrice might have left Wotton Hall without anything being said, and once human beings part they never know when they may come together again. It was the thought of losing Beatrice that gave me courage to ask her. Now I have said all that I may say, Dr. Knight, if I am to catch the post. I would not like to miss it, for I want you to know the news to-morrow morning.

On reading his letter over, Hugh paused, chilled by its unlikeness to himself. It might have been written by almost anybody except himself, and he attributed the impersonality of the letter to the fact that he was writing to his father-in-law, (to his coming father-in-law.) But should that make any difference? He frowned and fell to thinking. He had written what was in his mind and nobody could do more than that; so the letter must go. And feeling that he could not entrust it to anybody, he walked to the post town himself, after telling his mother and Beatrice, who still sat talking on

the sofa, where he was going. I don't like to entrust the letter to anybody else. Moreover, I haven't had a walk to-day; I must get one. Neither woman answered him, and when the door was closed Mrs. Monfert said: You see, Beatrice, how anxious he is for your father to know that everything is settled. Settled, Mrs. Monfert! Is everything settled? But how can you doubt it, my dear Beatrice? He has asked you to marry him and you have consented. Do you think he loves me, Mrs. Monfert? We are good friends, I know, but good friendship is not enough for marriage. Do you really think that gossip has not had much to do with this sudden proposal? Do you think he would have proposed to me if you hadn't told him about it? But I didn't tell him; he knew it, Mrs. Monfert answered. My dear Beatrice, nobody knows a man so well as his mother, and Hugh is timid; he reveals himself slowly, at certain moments, and then retires into his shell. He kissed me, Beatrice replied, as he might—well, as he might have kissed you, Mrs. Monfert. I can't get it out of my head that there is something wrong. Well, Beatrice, if you think like that I shall be heartbroken, for you will break off the marriage. Everything will come right, if you will only have patience. Men are all timid and reticent, but he will be different when you are married. As they spoke a dash of rain rattled on the window panes, blurring them, and Mrs. Monfert and Beatrice abandoned their thought of a walk, seeing in their minds Hugh, wrapped in a waterproof, marching through the mud and murk across the fields.

A little wind soughed nearly always round Wotton Hall, and on the day that Hugh walked to the post with his letter to Dr. Knight it soughed among the pines, bringing down sudden showers from the swaying elms, forcing him to take refuge under his umbrella at the risk

of having it turned inside out at any moment. And whilst he waited the women by the window watched the heavy, lagging clouds trail across the sky, till at last Mrs. Monfert left Beatrice to her book or to her thoughts; and it was at the same moment, when nearly half-way between Ongar and Wotton Hall, that Hugh stopped suddenly, remembering that he had not written to Percy. He was sorely minded to return to write a letter to Percy, but if he did he would miss the post; so he walked on under the grey sky, startling a cloud of little birds out of the hedges that soon returned to their shelters, or if the rain passed over, sought an evening meal under the wheat-stacks. And noticing that the cocks pursued their quarrels even on a day like this, he said: Mother and Beatrice are talking together, and of what should they talk but of me? Mother is telling Beatrice that she brought me up very strictly on account of my father's taste for village maidens, and that I shall be different when I am married. So I am to be married in a month or six weeks, as soon as it can be arranged. The word called up an hotel. Married people, he continued, always go to one for their honeymoon, and in six weeks I shall be on mine, finding her in bed. . . . He would ask her if he might come into bed; but did married people put such questions to each other? It seemed rude to take the quilt, to uncover her, and to lie down; yet this was an episode in the life of every man, strange and thrilling enough at first, soon, however, to drift into commonplace.

And he continued every day to wonder what his life would be when he was married. On leaving his bed in the morning, as he stood before his glass shaving, when he set forth on his walk through the wet, wind-worn country, he questioned himself, but without getting any answer to his questions. He questioned himself regarding the nature of his feelings towards her, for now that

she was no longer at Wotton Hall (she had gone to London to her aunt—they would be married from her aunt's London house), he seemed to love her, and even to desire that the days which divided them might pass over more quickly. Only fifteen more days of bachelorhood remained; in fifteen days he would be waiting for her at the Brompton Oratory. He would have liked to be married by Beatrice's father, but nobody had ever been married in the chapel of Stanislaus College; perhaps it was not advisable to set schoolboys thinking of marriage. Dr. Knight was coming to London; Percy was coming with him, and Percy's letter was still unanswered.

MY DEAR PERCY,—It was like you to write at once, as soon as the news reached you, and it was like me to have forgotten to send you a letter when I wrote to your father. I remembered you on my way to the post, as I stood under some sougning pine trees that afforded very insufficient shelter from sudden and drenching rains. I thought of writing something on a scrap in the post office, but my thoughts were frozen as well as my hands, so I postponed writing. And then your dear letter came congratulating me on my engagement to Beatrice, who is now in London with her aunt, Mrs. Ellwood. I lunched with them yesterday, but they ran away immediately after the meal, telling of many appointments, and I could not get five minutes alone with Beatrice to ask her to help me with a difficult passage in Ferabras. She told me to leave it, and said she would try to send me a translation of it, which was well, for had it not been for her appointments with milliners and dressmakers we might have spent the whole afternoon over it, and I should have missed seeing my lawyers. The legal business is tedious, but I can manage that better than I can the buying of Beatrice's wedding presents, for I have no

eye for jewelry; and whilst overlooking strings of pearls and brooches, all of which seem to me alike, none inspiring either liking or aversion, I think of you, who would be able to discriminate at once. I wish you were with me to choose Beatrice's presents, for I should not like her to be disappointed—I was going to write: in my taste, but that is the difficulty; I have no taste in jewelry; in drawing, in literature, perhaps, but in jewelry none. If two necklaces were to drop from the moon of different kinds and sorts, such as were never seen on earth before, you would be able to say: This is good, the other merely cheap rubbish. But I cannot discriminate. Buying things the beauty and worth of which you have no sort of opinion is very unsatisfactory, and I return home afraid of my mother's disapproval. She disapproves often but never gives her advice, and I say: Very well, mother, come up to London and choose the presents yourself; she will not do that, however, and so I flee from her to the Barn, and forget the present in memories of the days we spent wandering on foot through Wales, stopping at different inns. You remember the day we bought the partridges from the poacher and you cannot have forgotten the blow you received in that strange kitchen, and how in the middle of the riot the woman asleep by the fireplace woke up and told us the story of her dead son, everybody, poachers and gamekeepers alike, falling on their knees to pray. The blow you received was severer than you thought for, but you tramped on bravely and we reached St. David's at last, laid aside our knapsacks in the inn and wandered down the steep street to see the violet Cathedral under the sunset. I wonder if those days are fixed in your memory as they are in mine: the mornings we spent among the ruins of the Bishop's Palace, that was unroofed by Bishop Barlow to give wedding portions to his daughters,

who married five Bishops. How we laughed! Do you remember the ladies who were painting, one of them painting very well? She came over and admired your drawing. What were her words—that no one ever had drawn a mullioned doorway before as you did, making the ruins live again, exhibiting them in new and unexpected aspects. She was a clever woman to recognise the merits of your fanciful yet truthful pencil. After the ruins my memories go to the day that we walked across the high uplands burnt by the sea winds and climbed over stone walls, into hollows and out of them, till at last we came to a great gulf in which two boats lay, white specks below us, and we waited for the tide to come up and float them. The island, too, how wonderful it was in its solitudes, the Sound dividing us from a noisy civilization. And you remember our talks in the summer nights, for the days of September were still summer, in the hollow where we slept amid the ferns. Those were days of great fun, Percy; cooking our meals in the abandoned bungalow and fishing for them round the western coast of the island. You have not forgotten the day we explored the caves and brought back the poor little seal that cried so bitterly and was taken home by the bull and the cow that followed our boat, knowing the youngling was on board. I wonder if they were angry with us for borrowing him? We shall never know, for they said nothing, but were glad to take him home again, that was apparent. The long walk, too, Percy, when I told you the story of Ferabras, the story setting us talking of a dozen different things at the inn till we could hardly keep our eyes open and nearly fell asleep in our chairs. We spoke, I remember, of marriage, and rather contemptuously, myself saying that I always thought of a married man walking after his wife, carrying her shawl and parasol, a ridiculous spectacle. How we laughed!

I remember you charging me with a lack of sentimentality, and my answer: I am sentimental as another, but not about women. We dream our lives, but Nature makes them. If anybody had whispered to me as I lay down in bed: Thou'lt be married before the next year has well begun, I should have laughed. Yet it has come to pass, and I am glad, for is it not true that whosoever has not a vocation for art, like a priest for religion, shall accept the world as it is? Not believing myself to be an artist, as you are, I do not feel justified in withholding myself from the natural life of marriage. I might have done so if I hadn't met Beatrice, but I was fortunate enough to meet her, the only woman that I could have married, of that I am sure; and it is a great relief to me to know that on that one point at least there is certainty. As her husband I shall be able to help art indirectly, and every artist requires help; without patrons there can be no art. I shall be your patron, Percy—your translator to begin with and then your publisher. Beatrice and I will, when we come back from our honeymoon, apply ourselves to the happy task of finishing our translation of Ferabras. She is as much interested in your genius as I am, so everything is for the best. We shall meet in the Oratory next week. Good-bye.—Your affectionate friend,

HUGH.

XII

After the wedding Mrs. Monfert returned to her hotel, her thoughts turning to prayer, for all she had striven for, hoped for, dreamed of, had come to pass. If she had had all the women in the world to choose from, she thought, she would have chosen Beatrice as the wife for her son, the one who was most likely to lead Hugh out of the idle habits that he had seemed unable to shake off since the rebuilding of Wotton Hall; and she con-

gratulated herself that these long morning dalliances with the Middle Ages, his collection of armour, his sculpture, Greek and mediaeval, would come to an end naturally, Beatrice bringing into his life love of children, and with the coming of children his thoughts would turn to the administration of his estates, to assuming the position in the county to which he was entitled (he was not even a Deputy Lieutenant.) Beatrice might like him to enter Parliament! A son begins to resent his mother's influence after a time, and if she be a wise mother she surrenders the son to the wife, which she would do, leaving them to Wotton Hall. She was glad that Beatrice approved of the rebuilding and the furnishing, for after all the years she had spent saving money to rebuild it and to furnish it, to hear that it was not to the taste of the owner, indeed that it was in contradiction to all his ideas, that he would have much preferred a mediaeval castle to live in, was disheartening. But those were the ideas of a boy and would disappear. Beatrice must have a bedroom to sleep in—she couldn't sleep in a turret; where there are children there must be a nursery, and where there are ladies there must be drawing-rooms. Very soon her work would begin to be appreciated, and she began to think of the little triumph that would await her when she came to spend a few weeks with her daughter-in-law. Hugh's thoughts would be different then and he would sneer no longer, perhaps even admire the console tables and the Aubusson carpets. But why was she finding fault with her son? God had given her a very good one, and in return for what God had given her she had tried hard to bring him up in the love and the fear of God. And of his love of God there was no doubt; he was firm in his religion, and she recalled instances of his anxiety to arrive in time for Mass, not to lose a minute of it. He went to confession every week

and to holy communion, and his piety was her reward. Everybody has troubles and she had had hers, but it was her recompense never to have heard an evil story about him. At Stanislaus College the boys were well watched, but nothing had reached her ears, and when he returned to her in the vacations she had never seen him looking after the maidservants, had never had to send one away because she was pretty. All the same, it was strange that he had never shown any interest in the women who came to Wotton Hall; she had not known him care to speak to any woman before he met Beatrice. Indeed, it had seemed that women could inspire no thought in him but rather—— She paused before the word aversion, not wishing to pry into her son's life; but Beatrice's words: He kissed me as he might—well, as he might have kissed you, Mrs. Monfert, returned to her, and she said: We both suspect him. Once a man is married, however, his whole nature changes, she thought, and full of hope for his future she fell asleep, awaking next morning with hardly any faint remembrance in her mind of the fears of the night, yet they had been many.

At twelve o'clock she received a telegram saying they had arrived solely at Calais, where they would remain for two or three days, Hugh wishing to see the Cathedral. Wishing to see the Cathedral! she repeated, perplexed and suspicious, for it seemed to her that Hugh should be thinking of his wife rather than of cathedrals. There is a time for everything, she muttered, and fell to thinking; judged by the light of her reason her doubts were absurd and were laid aside, and she had begun to hope for the best when she was disturbed next morning by another telegram. Now what can have happened? she said, tearing open the yellow envelope: Come over to Calais by the midday boat, your presence urgently needed. My presence urgently needed! she cried. What can this

mean? The journey in the train and in the boat passed in vain conjectures; for nothing she could think of would Hugh have telegraphed for her to come to Calais, and it seemed to her heartless that she did not find him waiting to meet the boat. Why not have saved me five minutes of anxiety? And she was crying: It is heartless! when she caught sight of him waiting for her on the steps of the hotel.

What has happened, Hugh? My dear mother, you will find Beatrice in room twenty-six, and I'd prefer that you went to her at once. There are things that cannot be spoken of between mother and son; the lift is waiting; and terrified by these words Mrs. Monfert passed into the lift. Number twenty-six, she cried to a housemaid, who led her down a passage and before knocking at the door asked whom she should announce. There's no need to announce me; I am Mrs. Monfert. My dear Beatrice, what is the matter? she cried, and shut the door behind her. Hugh has sent me to you. I got a telegram from him early this morning in time to catch the boat train. He was on the hotel steps waiting for me and he sent me up here to you. Has he told you, Beatrice began—— No, nothing. Beatrice raised herself up in bed and sat looking at Mrs. Monfert. My dear girl, there are tears in your eyes. What is it? Confide in me. I have come to help you. You can't help me; he doesn't love me, he doesn't, he doesn't. But you have only been married two days! And to win the girl out of her grief she began to speak of the alarm Hugh's telegram had caused. To bring me over here for a quarrel that will be settled to-morrow or the day after—— There's no quarrel to settle, the girl said, and fell to weeping; nothing, nothing. It would be better that it should never be spoken of. But Hugh is greatly concerned, Beatrice; he was waiting for me at the door

of the hotel and begged of me to come to you at once. He is, I assure you, greatly concerned. If he were greatly concerned about me, Beatrice answered, he would not have left me as he has done. But he said he thought you could explain things to me better than he could, and I came upstairs. You can do nothing, Mrs. Monfert, nothing. But if you'll tell me everything, Beatrice, I may be able to help. No, you cannot; there's no help anywhere. He doesn't love me; my marriage was a mistake. Oh, Beatrice, Beatrice, you have been married but two days! It was he who told me, Mrs. Monfert, that the marriage was a mistake, and that he was no fit husband for me. But, Beatrice, you were only married the day before yesterday! Beatrice did not answer, and it was a long time before Mrs. Monfert could get another word from her. The spectacle of the distraught girl was almost unendurable, but she could not do else than persevere. You must take courage, Beatrice, and tell me what has happened. Beatrice, darling, I have come to help you. Mrs. Monfert, there is no help for me. The words were spoken in a more tranquil voice, and every moment Mrs. Monfert hoped that the needed words would come. But they were long in coming, and at last they came unexpectedly. Oh, mother—— May I call you mother? I lost mine long ago. Yes, Beatrice, I am your mother. Think of me as your mother, and tell me what has happened. On these words she put her arm round the girl and raised her up in bed. Come, Beatrice, tell me. I can only tell you the facts, mother. The facts will be a great help; we will try to understand afterwards. Begin at the beginning.

We had a very bad crossing and were so ill and tired when we arrived that I didn't expect Hugh to come to my room. And did he? Mrs. Monfert asked. No; I thought he might have come to say good-morning, but

he sent up word to ask if I'd like to lie in bed a little longer and have my breakfast upstairs, and I sent him word that I'd be down very soon. After breakfast we went to see the Cathedral. We returned to the hotel for luncheon, and went for a drive, seeing all that there was to be seen in Calais. He seemed preoccupied and nervous—— But all men are nervous during the first weeks of their marriage. Beatrice's eyes left Mrs. Monfert almost without hope. We dined together and sat up talking till he said: Beatrice, you look tired; you had better go to bed. I went to my room and waited for him to come, and presently the door opened. He hesitated for a moment on the threshold and asked if he might lie down beside me, and I said: Of course, are you not my husband? But when he took me in his arms a change came over him and he almost put me away; and then he spoke a few words, saying he would see me in the morning. Oh, I can't go over it again, I can't go over it again. But, dearest, you must. It's the only way. There's no way, dear mother, only through the Pope. He said I must get a nullity. A nullity, repeated Mrs. Monfert, after two days of marriage! He must be mad. No, he is not mad, nor even unkind. There's something behind all this, mother, that I don't understand, though you may; and if you do, I beg of you to tell me. When did he tell you that you must get a nullity—last night? No, this morning. He came to my room and said he was afraid he had done me a great wrong, involuntarily, of course. He spoke of a mistake—but in what was he mistaken? I am the same as I was always. I haven't got leprosy, there's nothing wrong with me. I am the woman he expected to find. Beatrice, darling, go on telling me the story just as it happened. He said he could never be any woman's husband. What does that mean, mother? That he

hates all women? I cannot tell you, Beatrice, but go on; repeat every word that he said and then perhaps I will be able to help you. He said that it would be easy for me to get a nullity and that he'd do everything in his power to help me to get one. I think he said he could love me as a sister but not as a wife. I asked him to tell me why—if there was any other woman he liked better, and he smiled, a little bitter smile, and told me he had sent you a telegram and that you'd be here presently and might be able to explain. But why should you be able to explain better than he? After all, he is my husband. And you love him, Beatrice? Yes, I do, mother; it was for no other reason that I married him. But the meaning of all this—what is it, what is it? Such a thing never happened to any woman before. I've heard of many marriages that went wrong afterwards, but never on the marriage night. Such a thing never happened before and never will again. And she continued in this strain till her nerves gave way, and hiding her face in the pillow she began to weep, so passionately that she was shaken, and so painfully that Mrs. Monfert was afraid something would break in her and her heart might give way. But at the word doctor, Beatrice said: No, no; send for no doctor. It isn't a thing of the body, it's a thing of the mind.

For one moment it seemed to Mrs. Monfert that she hated her son, and looking at the stricken girl she asked herself how it was that it befell her to bring such a man into the world; and then the sense of motherhood awakening in her, she said: I have not heard his story. She rang the bell, and the order she gave was that the waiter should go downstairs and enquire for Mr. Monfert, and say that Mrs. Monfert, his mother, wished to speak to him. But the answer the waiter returned with was that Mr. Monfert had left the hotel. Left the hotel! Mrs.

Monfert repeated, and taking the letter from the salver she opened it tremblingly, only half a dozen lines, saying that he was going to Beatrice's father to tell him the story, for only the Church could advise them. The Church! Mrs. Monfert repeated. What has the Church to do with it? Is the Church to come between man and wife? And she remembered he had once said to her: Only the Church can advise me; I should not be satisfied if I did not get the advice of the Church.

XIII

On his journey from Calais to London Hugh thought continually that Dr. Knight might be away on holiday, and he prayed that this last misfortune might not befall him; for he could not return to his wife, nor could he confide his secret to his mother. So everything depended upon seeing Dr. Knight; he could confide his secret only to a priest, to whom everything in human nature is made comprehensible by virtue of his sacred calling. But Dr. Knight was Beatrice's father and would be prejudiced, and it seemed to him that he lacked courage. At that moment a river winding through the landscape caught his eyes, river or canal—he was not certain at first which; a canal, for there was the towpath. He forgot his errand and remembered it again, for we do not think consecutively, only in spasms; and when at last the carriage took him through the lodge gates and the woods, stopping before the great door studded with iron nails, after the Gothic fashion, he began to recall all that Percy had told him about the folly of trying to revive dead idiom, art being no more than a series of formulas by means of which man interprets Nature. But to think of such things at such a moment was——

The door opened; he heard that Dr. Knight was at home, and passed into the modern Gothic building,

noticing in spite of himself Murillo's Virgin still on her crescent moon surrounded by cupids, her hands crossed, her eyes raised to heaven. But why think of such things at such a moment? he asked as he followed the passage to Dr. Knight's room, where he found the President seated before his great writing-table, a half-finished letter in front of him that Hugh judged to be a letter to the parents of one of the boys placed under his charge. As Hugh had come in unannounced, the prelate, thinking perchance that it was merely some casual visitor, finished the sentence he was writing, leaving Hugh watching the long, lean profile against the window.

Good heavens! My dear Hugh, an unexpected visit this is indeed. Why, I thought you were on your honeymoon. I was, but have returned from it, sir. Returned from it! But what is the matter? You look ill; sit down. I shall have great difficulty in telling you, Dr. Knight, but I'll try to tell you everything and truthfully. It will be very difficult—— Where is Beatrice, Hugh? She is in Calais with my mother. So your mother accompanied you? No, sir, I telegraphed for her. At these words Dr. Knight's face darkened, and Hugh heard him repeat the words! Telegraphed for her! But is Beatrice ill? She is in great grief, sir, but I don't think she is ill. Hugh, tell me what you have come to tell me, and do not keep me in suspense any longer. I shall have to begin at the beginning, and it will take some little while, else you will not understand. The facts first, sir—— And the explanation afterwards, cried the prelate. The fact is, sir, that I am not her husband and can never be.

The men stared without speaking, and breaking a long pause Dr. Knight said: My dear Hugh, this is a nervousness. To understand, you'll have to hear the story from the beginning, and then perhaps you will be able to advise me, at least I think and hope, Dr. Knight. And

when he had related the circumstance in which he had proposed to Beatrice, Dr. Knight asked if it was his mother's influence that had persuaded him. My mother, Hugh answered, was always very anxious for me to be married, and you know that I invited you to Wotton Hall in the hope that you would intervene between us, for at that time my mother was asking every woman she knew to the Hall with the view that I would pick one out. The day after you left, Percy and I went away together for a little holiday to Wales (you know all about that, sir; I told you here in this very room). She knew that I liked Percy, so she invited Beatrice. I am trying to follow you, Hugh. I suppose what you are telling me has some connection with your marriage? Yes, sir, it has. I liked Beatrice; she has the same tastes as I have, and we were engaged together upon the translation of a story of chivalry which Percy was to illustrate, and she was so sympathetic that I thought I loved her. But, my dear Hugh, you have only been married a day or two! cried the prelate, almost convinced now that he was in possession of the reason that had driven Hugh from his wife.

I was going to tell you, sir, of my perplexities before marriage, otherwise the story will not be plain to you. The seriousness of Hugh's tone calmed Dr. Knight, and he resigned himself to the task of listening. The whole story will not take more than a few minutes, Hugh continued. My mother asked me to take Beatrice to parties and I went about with her a great deal; and I liked her in a way, always suspecting, however—— Suspecting what? the prelate interposed. That there was very little conviction in it, Hugh answered, and I should never have asked her to marry me if our names had not been connected in social talk. No doubt people spoke of us as engaged long before the coupling of our names

came to my ears. Then came the day when I went to my mother and asked her if she had heard our names mentioned together, and she told me that unless I were altogether lacking in a sense of honour, my duty was to marry Beatrice. So I went to Beatrice and asked her if she liked me well enough to marry me. She said she did, and I was glad to hear her say it, but there was always the doubt in my mind. But what doubt? asked Dr. Knight. What doubt? It seemed to me that I loved her better, replied Hugh, when she was away from me than when she was by me. But every man loves a woman better when she is away from him than when she is by him, and what is true of man is true of woman. The doubt increased every day, Hugh continued, but I had no heart to break off the marriage. I liked her for my mother's sake, for yours, sir, for her own; I was fond of her and am still, but not as a husband. And pray when did you find out that important fact? the prelate asked.

Last night, sir. After the wedding I thought that I loved her; all doubt seemed to have gone. We arrived in Calais after midnight, and as we were both weary I did not go to her room. The next day we attended Mass in the Cathedral, and walked about the town, seeing all there was of interest. After dinner we remained sitting up talking till I noticed that Beatrice's voice wearied, and I said: Beatrice, the journey has tired you, you had better go to your room. I went to mine, and after leaving her enough time to undress I went to her. And what I remember best now is the moment on the threshold, Beatrice in bed and only three or four yards between us. But it was in these three or four yards that the change came; I asked her if I might come into her bed and she answered: What a strange question to ask me, Hugh! So I lay down beside her, hoping to recover myself; but her womanly body was no help, only a hindrance, and

the moments I spent with her were the most dreadful in my life. And that is the story you have come to tell me? the prelate asked, smiling almost cheerfully, for if it is, I think that I have got good news for you. My dear Hugh, every man, I may say, who is worth being called a man, who is not a brute, is seized with an excessive timidity on entering his wife's room for the first time, and I beg you to believe that all you have to do is to go back to your wife and to put your trust in Nature and in the sacrament for the paralysing shyness that you feel to pass away. All will come right, and in a year's time, maybe two or three, I shall receive an invitation from you to the baptism of my grandson or granddaughter.

Hugh's face remained unmoved, and the suspicion coming to Dr. Knight that perhaps his words were not bringing the consolation to Hugh's mind that he hoped they would bring, he continued: My dear Hugh, I am many years older than you are, and I have had a very varied experience of life. A widower who enters Orders does not speak often of his married life, but circumstance changes everything. I loved my wife deeply, and in telling me your story you are only telling me my own, with this difference—that I did not run away. I cannot speak to you about my wife's death; I could not speak many words without breaking down; as a priest I have to remember that all things in this world are but the will of God. I have heard many stories like yours, Hugh, and the advice I always give is the advice I have given you—go back to your wife and put your trust in Nature; I have never known my advice to fail. Hugh, I beseech you, go back to Beatrice. I am not telling you this because she is my daughter, and a very dear daughter, too; I am speaking in your interest as much as in hers. If I did not think you would make her a good husband I would not advise you to go back to her. I know

nobody I would sooner have for a son-in-law than you. Beatrice loves you, or she wouldn't have married you—that I know; a father knows his own daughter. I beseech you to go back at once; every hour you remain away from her is a danger.

Dr. Knight, I haven't told you everything, Hugh answered, and I can only tell you the full story under the seal of confession. Not that I mistrust you, but I should never be able to speak it except in confession.

The priest rose from his chair without speaking and Hugh saw him cross the room and return with his stole on his shoulders. He took a chair and Hugh fell upon the praying-stool, covered his face with his hands, and, after uttering a short prayer, said: Of no sin am I guilty, father, but I am in danger of sin, and hope like a Christian to be given strength to resist sin. I did not leave my wife because of impotence; I am not impotent. It would be better, perhaps, if I were, for then I should be out of reach of temptation. But, my son, God does not wish us out of temptation. We are in this world to resist temptation, to qualify ourselves by our resistance for his love, which lasts for ever. I am afraid, father, that you do not understand yet. I was attracted to Beatrice not for herself but for her likeness to her brother; her voice, her figure, her gait, in a thousand ways she reminded me of him, and I mistook the nature of my affection. I was deceived; it was not until I took Beatrice in my arms that I knew I could never love a woman. Does Percy know anything of this? Nothing, sir. We spent a few weeks together in Wales, as you know, and those weeks were as innocent in act and in thought as any weeks that ever were spent between two human beings. Percy knows nothing of my love. How could he, for I did not know it myself until last night. My dear Hugh, what you have told me is terribly serious,

more serious than anything I imagined, but it does not oblige me to withdraw the advice that I have given you just now. Go back to your wife and live with her, and put your trust in Nature and the sacrament, and this by-current in the blood will be swept away. Your wife will give you children, and the love of children is the base of human life. Apart from that all things are vain, except the love of God. Do you understand me, Hugh? Go back to your wife and put your trust in Nature and the sacrament. A good woman has helped many a man to outlive temptation, and children are sent by God to help man to live his life in the world.

Hugh did not answer, and the men remained looking at each other for a long time. There's no man from whom I would sooner take advice, sir, than yourself, Hugh said at last, but I know myself better than you can know me. It may be that others have come to you in the same trouble that I have, and that they have lived with their wives and been happy with them, but it would not be so with me. I couldn't, but even if I were able to take your advice I might meet somebody who would awake the old original instinct, and it would be harder for me to conquer it then than it is to-day. I might fall a victim to it. There is only one thing for me to do—to put aside the sexual life for ever, for if I were to accept the second best—— The second best, Hugh? Well, sir, I am telling you what I am, what God made me, and not what I wish to be and what you would wish me to be. To me Percy would be the better. However shocking it may be for you to hear this avowal, I must speak it. For his own high purposes God may have wished to try me, and a sore trial it is, to lay aside our instincts and affections for ever. But we may not judge God; we must accept his judgments with humility, and what I would wish you to know is that I did not seek in my

thoughts for this love, nor in books nor in pictures did I learn it; it was only yesterday that it was revealed to me. A strange revelation, you will think, to fall upon a chaste man—for I am that, but so it is. My thought is how to keep out of temptation and I've come to ask your advice, not whether I should go back to my wife, for that cannot be, but to ask if you would advise me to take Orders. Sometimes I feel that Orders would be a help. I have never doubted the truth of the religion I was brought up in; I have accepted it and put my faith in the Church, and that is why I come as a suppliant to you, who represent the Church.

The door opened suddenly. Father—— Why, Hugh, I thought you were with Beatrice, said Percy. You were married only the day before yesterday, and you are here to-day! Marriage, Percy, does not always suit every man. Oh, so you and Beatrice don't get on! I am sorry to hear that, I am indeed, but I hope we shall always remain friends, Hugh. I am afraid, Percy, that we shall not see each other any more, Hugh answered, and as I am speaking to your father now upon a matter of great moment—— I will ask you, Percy, to leave us, the prelate said, and when Percy had withdrawn, he continued: I don't think on the whole I could advise you to enter an Order, Hugh. You will be better alone, and, as I told you before, outside of the Church, you will be more help to our holy religion than you could be within it. You are a man of wealth and position; you have many people dependent upon you—men holding land from you, tenant farmers; many labourers are upon your estate. There's plenty of work for you to do, if you choose to do it.

If that be your advice to me, sir, I will take it. To feel that I am under your protection—under the protection of the Church will be a help. But you have not

given me absolution. You are not guilty of any sin, Hugh. I understand that you hate and abhor the temptation that you have confessed to me. I hope I shall not fall into sin, Hugh answered, but if I were to say that I abhor the temptation, I might be making a bad confession, for how can one hate and abhor that which is part of oneself? You must allow me to speak a little in my defence, sir, for I would not seem to you shameful. For the good opinion of the world I care little, but for yours I care a great deal. When I was a schoolboy I felt that none could advise me as you could. I was not happy as a schoolboy, for I wanted to rise to the head of my class, and I could not learn easily like other boys, who could do in ten minutes what I could not in as many hours. I was very unhappy and looked round the College for one to whom I could confess my unhappiness, not finding anybody but you, Dr. Knight. We were allowed to choose our confessors and I chose you, and laid my disappointments and my griefs before you; and it was your words that helped me. I don't know how I should have lived through my schooldays if it had not been for your kindness. I remember the day you said to me: I am forty years of age and life has passed me by like a dream. There's nothing wonderful to a man in those words, but they were wonderful to a boy. They were a help to me. As a priest you are forced to contemplate all things without prejudice, and you know I am not the first man who discovered himself to be as I am, averse from women. In the Bible——

It is always condemned, the prelate interjected. Yes; but in Antiquity the Greeks and Romans—— Hugh, the Greeks and Romans were born before our Lord Jesus came into the world to instruct it and to found a Church. Yes, sir, it is as you say. . . . It's painful to me to look upon myself as a pariah. The teaching of the Church

condemns all sensuality except the needful sensuality of the marriage bed, indulged in with a view to begetting children. Am I not right? Yes, you are right, Hugh, but—— Well, sir, what I wish to say is (for I wish my confession to be complete), that I cannot see that my sin—— But you are guilty of no sin, Hugh. What I wish to say is that even if I did fall into the sin that I have confessed to you, I do not think it would be worse than the sin committed by those who avoid the begetting of children. We need not indulge in casuistry, Hugh. We have to think now of what steps are to be taken. You tell me that you cannot go back to your wife?

No, sir, that cannot be. I have told Beatrice she can get a nullity, and it would be a great relief to me, sir, if you would promise to go to my mother and tell her that she must bear her burden as well as another, for it comes to that. She will look upon her life as a failure if I do not give her grandchildren. That cannot be, and if we are to live together, she must accept the fact that Wotton Hall will be without an heir; not a very great misfortune, so one would think, but she doesn't see it in that light, and I suppose we must admit her point of view. You will tell her that in everything else my desire is to be a good son? She has been a good mother to me and it distresses me that she should think I am to blame. Everything she pleases I will do that I can do. But one thing I cannot.

Hugh, you have said many things, more than you need have said, for a priest is never prejudiced against a penitent, or should not be, no matter what his confession may be. How could I deem you shameful when you tell me that the aim of your life is to avoid sin, and that all you ask for is strength to overcome sin? You ask for my help, and I cannot refuse it. Your mother must know what she may and may not expect from you, and, as you

say, she too must bear her burden. We all have burdens. I know, sir, that little things do not compensate us for a great loss. My mother is a good woman but has become obstinate in her ideas, as is but natural, for she has lived for one thing and one thing only. The priest answered that in his last visit to Wotton Hall he had gained some insight into Mrs. Monfert's character, and promised that he would telegraph to Calais to announce his arrival. I have to bring my daughter back to her aunt. Poor girl! The prelate stood looking at Hugh, his thoughts away, and it was some time before he could give his mind to Hugh's need. We have to consider yourself, he said at last. Are you going to return to Wotton Hall? Or would you like me to see your mother before you return? Why not go abroad, to Italy? Or for a trip round the world? A trip round the world would suit me better than Italian pictures, Hugh answered, but I don't think I could undertake it, at least not now. I must put my trust in Time and in a year or two my trouble will be loosened. When Beatrice is married—— Yes, when Beatrice is married, returned Dr. Knight; but before she can marry again she must forget you. You can make an appointment by telegram, sir, to meet them in London, unless you decide to go to Calais, Hugh said, to which Dr. Knight replied that nothing would be gained by his going to Calais.

XIV

What! Is it Hugh Monfert come back to us? Hugh recognised the voice and the appearance of Father Lambert, and answered: Yes, yes, you are quite right; I came to see the President. But you are not leaving us? and Father Lambert mentioned the names of several priests, every one of whom, he declared, would be sorry not to meet their old pupil again. Hugh's recollections of some

of the priests mentioned were by no means pleasant, and he was not anxious to meet them; and he protested that he was too tired to enter into conversation with anybody. Yes, I can see you are tired, said persistent Father Lambert; you must stay for dinner. Hugh protested again that he could not. Come into the parlour and have tea before you leave; you really can't go without taking something. Hugh's one thought was to get the ugly, modern, Gothic building behind him, with its tiles and its leaded panes and all its sham; but he was dazed and without will to resist, and allowed himself to be led into the parlour, to sit before the blazing fire and to hear Father Lambert order tea. Be sure to bring a plate of buttered toast, the priest cried to the servant. My cab is waiting at the door, Hugh pleaded, but he had no strength to do more than plead, and before the tea came the President entered the room, saying: Hugh, I have been asking for you. Your cab is at the door, so I knew you had not left. Father Lambert, I hope you will excuse me, but I have something of a private nature to discuss with Mr. Monfert. Father Lambert withdrew and Dr. Knight said: I have come to a different decision, Hugh. I cannot let your mother and my daughter travel over by themselves. I dare say nothing would happen to them, that they would arrive safely, but it would not be seemly. If that be so, Hugh replied, we shall have to catch an early train, and it's doubtful if you will reach Dover in time; the boat starts at two or thereabouts.

As Hugh spoke these words he foresaw a cheek-by-jowl dinner with Dr. Knight, a breakfast with him in the morning, and a starting out for a three hours' journey to London in the same railway carriage, alone perhaps in it, each rapt in his own thoughts, the silences broken by casual conversation. When will this torture be over? he asked himself, and cursed the untimely meeting with

Father Lambert and his own weakness in allowing himself to be led into the parlour and tea to be ordered for him. If he had only had the courage to shake off Father Lambert, he would be half-way to Birmingham by this time and free for ever from Stanislaus College, the very name of which was disagreeable to him; and henceforth Stanislaus College would be more hateful, for his one pleasant memory of it, Dr. Knight, would be associated in his mind with the most painful moments of his life. Of course this should not be so, for none could have been kinder than Dr. Knight; his kindness had exceeded anything that Hugh expected, yet he never would meet Dr. Knight again with pleasure. He had lost his friend. On looking through his life he could see nothing that he could call his own, nothing to look forward to—Except the moment, perhaps, when I shall bid him good-bye in London. And during the journey to London this moment was never out of his mind—when he and Dr. Knight would drive out of the station yard in different cabs, bidding each other good-bye.

But on arriving in London it seemed to Hugh that he could not do else but accompany Dr. Knight to Charing Cross. It would not look well to leave him, since he had been so kind and sympathetic, till the last moment. But he did not foresee that they would arrive at Charing Cross half an hour before the train started; had he foreseen this, he would not have gone, for the walking up and down the platform was very irksome, Dr. Knight speaking very kindly—he could not do otherwise. It was sometimes in Hugh's thoughts that the prelate might change his mind again and say: I cannot leave you, Hugh. My daughter is with your mother, who will take care of her. My duty is towards you. He did say something of the kind, and Hugh answered: But nothing can happen to me, sir, nothing. I shall think over the advice you have

given me to go for a trip round the world, to come back in a year or two years when the memory has faded. He could see that his words did not altogether convince Dr. Knight, and the prelate seemed to hesitate before the door of the railway carriage; but at last he stepped in and was carried away. To meet his daughter, my wife, Hugh said (for she will be that till she gets a nullity), and to meet my mother, it being his business to tell her as much of the truth about me as he can bring himself to tell, as he knows how to tell. He will, of course, make it plain to her that there can be no question of my returning to Beatrice or marrying another woman if—— The driver of the omnibus only just managed to pull up his horses in time, and heedless of the scorn and jeers that flowed down from the box, Hugh continued his way up the Strand, stirred now and then by an obtuse curiosity in a passing face, a hat or bonnet, or brought to a full-stop at the corner of a street to watch a cloud unfolding above the chimney-pots, his uplifted eyes gathering a crowd, each passenger asking the next one where he was to look and what it was all about; and Hugh, not daring to draw attention to the beauty of the cloud or spire, moved on, walking any whither, no whither, coming at last upon a passage leading out of Oxford Street into a courtyard, at the back of which was an inn; and the inn striking him as one in which he might live unobserved, he ascended the sloping staircase, followed by a waiter in a seedy suit of black that seemed as old as the house itself. What about your luggage, sir? My luggage, Hugh answered, is in the cloakroom at Charing Cross; here is the ticket. Let your messenger go for it at once.

A fire was burning, and in the warmth of it Hugh began to doze and between sleeping and waking he caught glimpses of Dr. Knight in the railway carriage,

and was amused at the spectacle of the prelate reading his newspaper, laying it down to wipe the dust from his glasses, and then, after searching it through and through for something that might interest him, throwing it aside in despair to take refuge in his own thoughts. A fly, however, distracted his attention from them, and Hugh laughed in his dream, for the insect visitor annoyed the prelate very much. A long, brown, skinny hand battled in the air; and then, to Hugh's disappointment, for he would have liked the fight to continue, the whimsical fly seemed to lose interest in the nose that had attracted him so persistently. He has fallen asleep, Hugh said, but he'll not sleep for long; the fly will return to awake him. The prelate awoke, but it was not the fly that awoke him, and Hugh watched his father-in-law searching his pockets, and so frantically that he began to fear Dr. Knight had forgotten to take his ticket at Charing Cross. The door of the carriage opened; the inspector appeared; and the ticket was discovered and punched. It's all right, he'll reach Dover, Hugh said to himself. Dover! Dover! he repeated, the word rousing in his mind a sense of something oracular. Dover! The word took on a strange, occult significance, and he pondered it whilst the way-side stations fled by, fields, hills and trees. All this passing, he said, is bringing the prelate nearer to Dover, where he'll take the boat for Calais; or may he be tempted by some project to go on board the Ostend boat? But I'll not be outwitted once more by a priest. And he fell to examining the luggage piled on the rack, and discovering a suitcase plastered with labels, he read: Tunis, Tangiers, Morocco, towns well known to him by name. But he had never heard of L-a-g-h—The end of the word was missing, and he could not tell how long he had been away seeking among Arab

terminations when suddenly the letters o-u-a-t came up in his mind. Laghouat! But what brought the prelate to Laghouat? What instinct had tempted Dr. Knight into the desert? Hugh raised his eyes to assure himself that he had not misread the first letters. The suitcase was no longer in the rack and Dr. Knight had left the carriage, and was not to be discovered among the jostling crowd that covered the station from end to end on its way to the boat. If I do not find him, I shall have to go back, Hugh cried in despair, but the faces of the passengers showed little commiseration, and at that moment the rustle of the door as it passed over the pile carpet caused him to open his eyes. Words escaped his lips; the waiter retired; and Hugh sank back into a dream in which he saw Dr. Knight going towards the hotel where Mrs. Monfert and Beatrice were awaiting his arrival.

I must not lose sight of him again, for though he may promise my mother and Beatrice to go to Rome and bring all his influence to bear to get a nullity, he may at the last moment turn aside, tempted by memories of Laghouat. . . . Here is a clutch of eggs, he heard the prelate say, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen; the eighteenth and the nineteenth have just been laid; take them. Hugh stretched out his hands, but as he did so Dr. Knight cried: We must run for our lives. I forgot to tell you that the eggs are a crocodile's. Mother crocodile has been watching her eggs hatching in the warm mud, and is now running towards us; we haven't a moment to lose. The great lizard could run faster than either, but could not turn as quickly as they, and by dodging her they managed to escape into an Arab town of streets so narrow that a camel could not turn in the broadest of them. I think the appointment was made in this café, said Dr. Knight.

And remarking that it was without windows, they entered a door that stood ajar, finding themselves in a vast gloom, with here and there groups and single figures sitting at tables and drinking sherbet. Are you seeking Osman Tahar, the Kurd's mignon? an attendant asked them. Before the prelate could reply a young Arab rose, graceful and indolent, out of the gloom in which he was seated and began to tell them of the difficulties he had had to overcome and the danger of coming to the café. He spoke French fluently, and stopping suddenly in his narrative he took Hugh's hand, saying: *Amnez moi à Paris, je serai votre domestique et je vous aimerai bien.* As Hugh was about to reply his ear was caught by the sound of a voice well known to him—his mother's voice, and escaping from the infatuation gathering about him, he wandered in search of three figures whom he could discern in the gloom of the pillars passing up and down, along and across the building. He heard the word Rome, the word train, the word journey, and the word tunnel left no doubt in his mind that the prelate was on his way to Italy. But is he going to procure an annulment of my marriage? Hugh asked himself, and to find out the priest's intentions he followed the three from pillar to pillar, asking himself for what other purpose his father-in-law could be going to Rome. And yet . . . and yet . . .

At last the three stopped by the pillar in whose shadow Hugh was hiding: Where the marriage has not been consummated, Dr. Knight said, Rome never hesitates to grant an annulment; the gravest reasons will have to be advanced, for instance that the Catholic cause in England—— If ten thousand pounds will prevent the annulment of the marriage, I am prepared to give it. Ten thousand pounds is an argument that

will be appreciated, Mrs. Monfert, and if you are of my opinion that the marriage will be advantageous to the Catholic cause in England—— The moral reason to plead against the annulment of the marriage is that we are full of hope that Hugh and Beatrice may still come together, not to-morrow or the day after, but in two or three years. I shall find my son awaiting me at Wotton Hall. I shall not speak to him of Beatrice but shall try to interest him in the estate, mayhap in the building of a church. The pressure I shall exercise will be so light that he will not perceive it. Beatrice will come to stay at Wotton Hall, and my hope is that instinct will do the rest.

The door opened. Your luggage has arrived, sir, and you'll find your things laid out in your room if you wish to dress for dinner. Hugh's eyes opened and he stared like a man awakened from the dead, frightened, for he did not recognise the room about him and he seemed to have even forgotten himself; and then memory returning to him, he rose to his feet. A strange dream truly, he said to himself, one that cannot be dismissed as accidental and unimportant, for her mind is apparent in the words that I heard her say in my dream. She said she would willingly pay ten thousand pounds, and she spoke the truth; she would pay ten thousand pounds to save the idea to which she has given her life. She will give ten thousand for an heir! It seemed to Hugh at that moment that all his life was concentrated into one clear vision. My life against her life! You'll find your dress clothes, sir—— The waiter's voice barely awoke him from his dream. I shall not dine, he answered, I am too tired; and when the door closed he stood asking himself who had sent this dream, so precise, so explicit, and so opportune. Even if I wished to ignore it, I couldn't.

His mind seemed to fade into nothingness, and when his thoughts returned to him he was thinking that he had been given to his mother as an animal is to a trainer. Ideas, principles, beliefs, he said, are lashed into us by our mothers, our fathers, by priests, schoolmasters, and our lives are spent going through our tricks, our antics, in fear and trembling, till the original wild instinct breaks out in us and we fall upon our trainers and rend them. She'll not find me waiting for her at Wotton Hall, to be subdued once more by a pressure so slight that I shall not feel it, my estate affording me sufficient occupation, and remembering my interest in art did she not speak of the building of a church? I shall gather ideas for windows and tessellated pavements in Italy, and go on to Greece, and if Percy takes Orders her punishment may be to see him officiate in my church. And his thoughts returning suddenly to Laghouat, he recalled the tone of the Arab voice, which he would know again. He felt sure that the words had been spoken but when they were spoken and where they were spoken and by whom they were spoken, he would never know, nor by what magic they had come into his dream.

HENRIETTA MARR

I

It happened that Etta's carriage stopped within a few yards of where her brother was standing, and she went to him, saying: I thought the train journey would never end. The train is not late, he answered. If you had been in it, Harold, you would have thought it was; and now it seems that we shall never get away. A bad crossing? Harold interjected. My head is still full of it. We were packed like sardines, and a great tinful we should have been for the fishes if we had gone down. But shall we ever get away? Look at the luggage and see how it accumulates!

A barrier was formed, and trunks of all shapes and kinds began to appear, round leather trunks, bound with straps, testifying to trousers, coats, greatcoats, boots, perchance a dressing gown on top; great basket trunks went by, bespeaking dinner dresses, bodices, skirts, blouses, underlinen, shoes, everything except hats. A porter passed staggering under the weight of a long, shallow trunk, built to withstand the racket of travel to India and back, and he was followed by another porter carrying a suitcase and a Gladstone bag; leather hat-boxes were rare, men preferring to take them into the carriages with them, fearing the crush in the vans. Oh, the multitudinous hills of luggage! cried Etta. The boxes and the bags! It will take hours to examine them all. We shall miss the connection and not get to Sutton until midnight. What is the matter, Etta? Harold asked. Only nerves, she replied, but I'm making every

effort to control myself. I will tell you about the boat train presently. Do you think we shall catch a train to Sutton this evening? You've been overworking, Etta, I'm certain of that. The train that comes up from Dover is one of our best trains. Now here is the Customs House officer. But will he let my trunks through, or shall I have to open them? If you talk like that in his hearing, he'll ask you to open them all. Answer his questions calmly, indifferently, and he may let your trunks through without an examination.

Harold was right, for the Customs House officer, after overlooking Etta carefully, and judging her not to be a smuggler, marked her trunks with a piece of chalk. A porter put them on a barrow, and half an hour later they were in a slow train for Sutton. You've been overworking, Harold said, looking into his sister's face with a view to descrying any change that may have befallen her during the months she had passed in Paris, and she answered that she had spent a great many hours every day in the studio and had come home on account of the heat. Harold asked her why she had not come home before, and she repeated that the heat was unbearable, the sun pouring through the skylight like a flame in July, driving the students out of Paris into the country to paint landscapes. A week before she left there was a great exodus, Renouf going away to Honfleur, his native town, to paint fishermen, Doucet leaving for his honeymoon (he was marrying an American girl who had been courting him flagrantly all through the session), and Jamain was on his way to Rome, having won the prize. Only a few unworthy ones, she said, remained to continue their grimy drawings. I really couldn't watch them blackening paper any longer, and feeling worn out I came back. I wonder you didn't come back before, Harold said, and inwardly he congratulated himself that Etta

had not brought back with her Renouf, Doucet or Jamain. He was always a little nervous as to the class of man Fate would give him for a brother-in-law.

Cissy Clive and Elsie Lawrence have gone to Fontainebleau with their young men to paint birches and oaks, Etta said, and at the words: Gone with their young men, Harold's face deepened a little, for he remembered these girls as very middle-class; and despite Etta's admiration for Ralph Hoskin's talent, he still bore a grudge against the painter for the advice he had given Etta. If you want to learn painting, he had said to her, you must go where painting is being done, and it's being done in Paris. And Harold's old aversions against Etta's National Gallery acquaintances returned to him on the journey to Sutton. Gone to Fontainebleau with their young men to paint birches and oaks did not harmonize with his view of the acquaintances that Etta should choose for herself. But since she had decided to go to Paris, it was better that she went with Cissy Clive and Elsie Lawrence than alone. If he had been able to procure a chaperon for her, she would have flaunted his choice, so to some extent he was indebted to both of these girls, and would have to ask them to the Manor House when they returned to England. Gone to Fontainebleau with their young men might only be Etta's way of talking, and as it seemed to him useless to express any disapproval of her friends, he began to ask her questions about her life in Paris, the hotel she and her friends lived in, and the eating-house they frequented. She had mentioned Duval in one of her letters, and he confused Duval with Durand, to Etta's great amusement. Durand, she said, is a great restaurant in Paris; the Duvals are eating-houses. But is it reasonable to expect me to know the names of the restaurants and the eating-houses in a city that I have never visited? And now that she had explained to him what the Duval

really was, he began to wonder why his sister had chosen to live in such discomfort; for his sister, as far as he knew her, was more averse from squalor than another. He had always thought her one who preferred to look up rather than down, and it was on his lips to put some enquiries to her; but seeing that she was weary and tired, on the verge of a nervous breakdown, he thought it would be safer to ask her about her journey.

Whereupon she broke forth into a pleasant garrulousness, telling him that she had enjoyed watching the French country as it passed through a long stretch of fens, pools, meres, linking one into the other so closely that she never was sure that the train was not following the course of a marshy, sluggish river; on one of these pools was an abandoned boat. But why do you think the boat was abandoned, Etta? It is probably used daily. I hope it isn't, she answered; it would be out of keeping with the landscape if it were. He asked if she had made a sketch of the boat, and learnt from her that lunch had helped the time away till the train passed into a landscape from which the sea never seemed to be far distant, sand-hills and pines; and travelling on and on they caught sight of the sea at intervals, losing it again and again, till at last it appeared before them, calm as a lake, speckled with ships. We embarked, Harold, and voyaged under a pale mauve sky till the white cliffs came into view. You have no idea how fine they are, despite the fact that they have been called the parapets of an island of blowing woodland. Although Etta knew that the slightest memory of his business would wipe from his mind the most beautiful description of sea and sky ever penned, she returned to the sunset to plague him, and when she had exhausted her vocabulary in description of the trains she described how she had, during the whole of the crossing, walked to and fro, getting into her lungs

as much sea breeze as she could, which they wanted sadly.

He will understand that, she said to herself, and was rewarded by some commendatory remarks from Harold as to her wisdom in remaining on deck, and of all, in returning home, remarks that provoked her out of her facetiousness, and becoming terribly serious she asked him if she was looking a fright. He answered that she was looking tired, and she replied that she was all right till she reached Dover. I've never been in a train that crawled into Chatham up a long incline like a beldam, she said. At Chatham we saw the sea again, which was a great discouragement, for I thought we had left the sea a hundred miles behind us. You know how in a dream we try to escape from something and can't? It was like that, and about an hour ago I seemed to lose control of myself. Yes, you seemed very nervous when you jumped out of the train at Charing Cross. I don't know how it was, but the Dover train got upon my nerves, she answered. The ten miles between London and Sutton are passing pleasantly enough now. And the Manor House, if I remember rightly, is near the station. How far is it, Harold? Now, Etta, I'm not going to tell you how far the Manor House is from the station. As if you had forgotten!

Harold's density, or rather his lack of humour, his slow, methodical mind, had always been an amusement to his mother and sister, who looked upon him as a very pure Marr in mind and in body; and recalling her mother's words: Never did a mind and body come together so harmoniously, Etta applied them to Harold, thinking with amusement, but not unkindly, that his mind was inevitable in a thin, well-proportioned man, who walked with his shoulders set well back, and caressed a long, golden moustache with a short, crabbed hand. She acknowledged his nose to be better shapen than her own;

but what she lost on the nose, she gained on the eyes—his wore the same brown stare always, and she fell in with her mother's judgment that whosoever saw Harold would recognise him to be the type of the South-Saxon, commonplace and steadfast. And then her thoughts passing from Harold to her mother, she remembered the pain that his mother's failings used to cause Harold during the last years of her life; for there was no denying that her mother often drank more wine than was good for her, and when that happened her tongue was unrestrained—she talked with her butler during dinner about the cedars of Lebanon; and though Harold admired his mother's contributions to the *Saturday Review*, he could not bring himself to accept them as sufficient atonement for her social transgressions. Indeed, he would have preferred that she ceased to contribute to the *Saturday Review* and other papers, and in unguarded moments he was wont to produce his opinion that the people of the Manor House should refrain from playing the piano in public, and from suburban acquaintances.

Etta threw back to her mother in many little ways, for a true Marr would not have picked up acquaintances in the National Gallery—an Orme (Mrs. Marr was an Orme) might. Etta, too, recognised her kin in the Orme rather than in the Marr. The readiness with which she reproduced her musical memories on the piano came to her from her mother; likewise her taste for art. Mrs. Marr had brought back copies of Andrea del Sarto and Luini from Italy, and visitors were expected to accept them as originals and Etta's water-colours as prodigies, which they were able to do without suffering in their consciences; artists didn't come in those days to the Manor House. And Etta's thought on returning home was of her mother, who, with all her faults, would have rendered homage to the drawings she was bringing, some compre-

hension, some interest at least. Harold would, of course, ask to see her drawings, and the thought of showing drawings to Harold, who was a real Marr, more Marr than ever, more like himself, awoke the spirit of comedy in Etta; and remembering that a man proclaims his inner entity in his choice of meats, she asked him what he had ordered for dinner.

Well, Etta, I'm afraid that at this moment I can't recall the whole of the bill of fare, but I'm sure there's some salmon. That's English enough, she answered slyly, detecting a better opening for her wit when Harold happened to mention jugged hare. Isn't that rather a sudden leap? she enquired. Leap where? Into England's most characteristic dish, she replied, her amusement suddenly checked by his answer that if jugged hare was not to her liking, the cook would be able to find something that was in the larder. It isn't a question of my liking it, Harold, she interrupted, fearing that she had offended him, a thing she did not wish to do. A year of hard work has made me nervous, and I'm trying to forget myself in a joke, that is all, only you won't let me. I am so tired and weary that whether there was jugged hare or boiled chicken or grilled salmon—— Again you're making fun of England, Etta. Oh no, Harold, I'm not. I am too tired to eat, that's all. He asked if she would come down to dinner. No, Harold; let me have a cup of weak tea and a biscuit. You'll forgive me for not sitting through the jugged hare with you, for I'm very, very tired, and you'll not expect me at breakfast and will go away as usual by the nine o'clock train? His anxiety to catch the nine o'clock train to London was a family joke, and Harold was about to say that he was weary of the joke and that it was time a new one were invented; but the train was running into Sutton, and he said instead: The carriage will be waiting for us,

and don't ask me how far we are from the station. She welcomed this tardy appreciation of her joke, and a few minutes afterwards they passed through the lodge gates, and a footman came forth to take down Etta's luggage. You are sure, Etta, that you will not take even a little soup before going to bed? No, Harold; I couldn't eat anything, not even soup. And he watched her ascending step by step wearily, indulging in the hope that there was nothing radically wrong with her, and that she would be well again after a good night's rest.

It doesn't seem to me as if I shall ever be able to think of eating again. I am too tired even to sleep, she sighed as she laid her head on the pillow; but the many restless hours she saw before her did not come to pass. I must have fallen asleep at once, she said, stretching herself voluptuously. The day is broad and bright, and how pleasant the room is. For how long have I slept? What time is it? Ten, eleven, or maybe twelve o'clock. Not so bad as that, she added, catching sight of the clock, only half-past ten. So she turned over and lay in a happy, lucid idleness among the pillows for another hour, thinking of her bathroom and the comfort of it, remembering that in the hotel in the Quartier Latin there was no bathroom, and that she and Cissy and Elsie had to go to some public baths, a thing that she disliked to do. Bathing, she had said, where all the bodies in the town have been, a remark that had provoked them to chide her. For fastidiousness, she said, and for coarseness on another occasion, when she had answered Elsie, who came into her room to borrow one of her dresses: With pleasure, Elsie, if you promise not to return it to me. I cannot abide anybody's sweat but my own.

Etta turned over and over, thinking how pleasant it was to go straight from one's bedroom to one's bath; and returning from her bath in a white wrapper, she stood

before the glass saying: What a fright I am looking! I ought to be looking better after my long sleep. We are in for a hot day, she added, and began to consider what she should wear. One doesn't know what to wear in such weather as this, she continued, as she settled the ribbons in her white dress and looked once more into the glass to see if the soft, fluffy hair which the least breath disturbed, was disarranged. She smoothed it with her short, white hand. There was a wistful expression in her brown eyes, a little, pathetic, won't-you-care-for-me expression which she cultivated, knowing its charm in her somewhat short, rather broad face, ending in a pointed chin. The nose was slightly tip-tilted; her teeth were white, but too large; she was short, somewhat stocky, yet she seemed almost stately as she passed with measured and demure steps along the passages and down the high staircase, stopping in the breakfast-room in front of a ham and a tongue with a gesture, though nobody was there to admire it. Eggs, bacon, kidneys, she said, lifting the covers of the dishes, and she crossed to another table, to be tempted by a melon. Only a water melon, but a good one, she said; and her thoughts went to the great Canteloupe melons of France, rough-skinned and wide-furrowed, just as if Nature had foreseen the silver knives slicing them into portions, red inside, filled with seeds. *De quoi manger et boire*, she muttered, airing her French gaily, for her thoughts were still in France. Now if Harold were to hear me criticising his melons, how angry he 'd be!

The coffee, however, in Sutton was plentiful and good, and having refreshed herself according to her appetite, she strolled to the windows and walked through them on to a flagged pathway, over which her father and mother had built a veranda on their return

from one of their Italian journeys, forgetful that a veranda, as its name implies, is not English, and that a sloping roof, a portico, connected with a sturdily-built low house in grey stone, is an incongruous adjunct. The house would have been better without it, Etta reflected, though on a day like this, almost oriental, a veranda is something more than a piece of unnatural picturesqueness. We have been having the same weather here for some time, Miss, said the butler, to whom Mrs. Marr used to address most of her conversation during dinner, and all the fields about are opening in great cracks. It's just the same in France, Collar, Etta replied, and looking at a stretch of country shelving down towards a shallow valley, spreading gently into woods and fields, all dry as tinder, that a match would set fire to, she thought of the melancholy of summer-time, when the season is at pause and the sap no longer rises and the leaves are withering. They will be gone earlier this year than last, she said to herself, and her reverie ending, she began to think if she would walk across the parched fields to the point of view, her thoughts turning to the prospect which she knew so well, for long ago, when they were children, they went thither for picnics, and heard a tale of their grandfather, John Marr, the founder of the family, whose wont it was to sit there dreaming of the purchase he would make of acres if his whisky continued to sell well. He owned but a few hundred acres, and coveted the thousands that reached up to the horizon, confiding to his son, Richard, that when he had bought Chown's farm on the horizon, he would be able to bring his friends to see the view, and to say: (For none will know that the piece lying in between does not belong to us), Our lands extend as far as the eye can see, to the horizon.

II

The rooms within the great stone walls of the Manor House at Sutton were large but somewhat low, the house being a low, three-storeyed house; and everywhere there were pictures, in the passages, in the drawing-rooms, in the dining-rooms, two generations having set themselves to form collections, and very disparate were the tastes of John and Richard Marr. John Marr, never having been to Italy, bought out of the Royal Academy, and in his share of the collection were pictures by Wilkie, Egg, Webster, and many brown glens by Linnell, his money not having come to him soon enough for the purchase of Turners.

Our grandfather seems to have liked Westhall and Stoddart, Etta said. If one likes one, it's only natural to like the other. And don't you like either? Harold asked. In a way, but English painting seems more or less amateurish. England never seems able to learn to draw. What, interjected Harold, not Wilkie? The Dutchman did all that he did, and better. But he seems to have been able to grasp the construction of a head better than the others, better than Hilton. Our grandfather's eyebrows, Etta added, after a pause, are very well done, and it is difficult to draw an eyebrow. Harold asked how this was, and a moment after they had forgotten the portrait they were looking at and were talking of the man himself, the founder of the family, whose instincts for business filled Harold with an admiration that he never was able wholly to conceal, even when talking to strangers, and Etta with a slight contempt, which she was never able wholly to conceal when Harold began to tell of his grandfather's admirable foresight when he lent a friend some money to pay a debt of honour, the secur-

ity being a large number of shares in a distillery. She had heard the story many times in fragments, and foreseeing that she would have to hear it all again, she permitted herself to impugn her grandfather's conduct, asking Harold if it were true that, on being elected Chairman for his business instincts, he had allowed the trade of the distillery to die away till the shareholders were glad to get rid of their shares. The story ran that the shareholders had held on too long, and that their grandfather was afraid the reforms he had in mind would never enable him to recapture the trade he had let go.

I cannot understand how it is, Etta, that you take pleasure in trying to pick holes in those upon whose industry and foresight you are living. I admire my grandfather as much as you do, Harold, only I admire him for different reasons. I was anxious this morning to go to the point of view. If grandfather had not died when he did, he would have bought those five thousand acres, and would have been made a Baronet, perhaps a Lord. Brewers and distillers have never been raised to the Peerage, Etta. Oh yes, they have, Etta answered. Not in the 'forties, said Harold; don't forget that grandfather died in 'forty-five. We must give him credit for his good intentions, which father might have realised, and which you might realise, Harold, if you cared. But do you care so much, Etta? I thought that you only cared for painting.

Their talk passed from their grandfather to their father, whom Sir Francis Grant had painted amid Italian mountain scenery, and Mrs. Marr in the midst of old masters, lost in admiration of a Guido Reni. On the walls were many copies, Andrea del Sarto being a favourite with both Mr. and Mrs. Marr. One of Mrs. Marr's *obiter dicta* was well known in Sutton and much

admired; she had said: If you have not money to buy Raphaels and Michael Angelos, the next best thing is to buy copies. Mother seems to have liked Salvator Rosa, Etta continued, but I think it was his name that exalted his landscapes in her eyes. You remember, Harold, mother always used to roll it out: Salvator Rosa. She never missed putting a great deal of R into Rosa, did she, and even went to the trouble of playing some of his music, for he composed songs, which she sang, do you remember, at the concerts? Harold remembered his mother's follies and also her failings, but he was sensitive on the subject and did not wish them alluded to. Malice was, however, instinctive in Etta, and accepting his dark face for a reproof, she said: I have as much right to admire father and mother as you have, Harold. We don't admire them for the same things, that is all. Our father and mother had a house in Berkeley Square and received all London, and were received by all London. I have heard you say yourself that at the dinner father gave after winning the Lincolnshire Handicap there was only one untitled person in the room—Aunt Mary.

The races that preceded and that followed the Lincolnshire Handicap nearly cost us our business. Father and mother could not understand that the source of our fortune was not inexhaustible, and went on spending. At the end of her life mother couldn't see anything without wanting to buy it, and father never went to the office. I think they were both ashamed of it, as I think you are, Etta. A business that we are ashamed of hits back very quickly—— If father and mother had lived, Etta interjected—— Let us not think of that, Harold replied, and Etta asked him if the business, since he took it in hand, was reviving. The question untied Harold's tongue and he talked for a long

time, wearying Etta with details, for what interested her was how much they would have to spend and how soon it would be before Harold could afford to give her a house in Park Lane. But I thought, Etta, that your idea was to live in the Quartier Latin with students. You have no ambition, Harold, Etta answered, to which he replied that every man has ambitions, projects, call them what you will, and that his thought was to realise his grandfather's idea—the purchase of a great landed estate. And answering a look of perplexity which had come into her brother's face, she said: When I am in Paris I think of nothing but painting, for painting is being done all round me. But if I had a house in Berkeley Square I should think of other things besides painting. One likes to know and to be known, and if one has not a title one has to do something, to write a book or paint a picture. But what I don't understand are people with titles bothering themselves about books or pictures. Why aren't they satisfied with their titles?

I am glad to hear you speak like that, Etta, for I thought you were going to spend your life in Paris. Not my life; but I am going back, although I don't feel sure that painting is as deep in me as I thought for. A look of doubt, amounting to sorrow, came into her face, and to cheer her Harold reminded her that a certain staleness comes often after a long year's work. Yes, she answered, a year of eight hours a day is a long year. Yet you tell me that you think painting is not so deep in you as you believed it to be. Is it the weariness that comes after a year's work, or did you hear anybody say so—Cissy, Elsie, or the Professor? I shouldn't pay any attention to what Cissy and Elsie said; that would be jealousy. The Professor, I assure you, thought a great deal of my drawing. Lefebre

went round the studio correcting one Tuesday morning, and before leaving he said: Miss Marr's drawing is the best in the studio, and I do not except even Doucet's. And Doucet was his private pupil, who worked in his studio. Of course I don't think that at the end of the week my drawing was as good as Doucet's; I cannot carry out a thing to the rounded end as well as he. But they mustn't expect too much from me. I am only four-and-twenty, and at that age one isn't an Ingres, not altogether, not even a Lefebvre or a Bouguereau.

Her face lit up and pleasant laughter flowed from her lips, for she was aware of her own vanity; it amused her, and she knew how to make good her retreat from it with laughter. Harold, who had been brought up to admire his sister, was caught by her delicious comedy and begged that she would send upstairs for her portfolios; and she, nothing loth, asked him to ring for her maid. And her drawings and sketches were overlooked till Harold had exhausted his vocabulary and admitted pathetically: To think you should have done all these drawings, Etta, and that I should not be able to understand them, or very little. I am afraid that I understand only whisky. And now about the whisky. A nightcap would guarantee you a long night's rest, I am sure, for you're looking very tired, and I have no hesitation in saying that it would be well if you remained in bed for a few days. A rest cure is what you need.

III

As soon as she was able to leave her room, she was ordered to the sea-side, and after a fortnight at Brighton she went to stay with some friends in London, returning to the Manor House for Christmas to entertain a large party of Harold's friends, business men,

several of whom looked upon themselves as patrons of the art of painting because they collected bad pictures, which they bought right off the easel, a favourite phrase when telling each other of their purchases. Sometimes it dropped into their conversations with Etta, provoking an ironical answer, a quick stab, reaching to the very heart of their vanity; and then she would sit listening to them without even a look of weariness upon her face.

As soon as the holidays were over and she had bidden the last of Harold's friends good-bye, her thoughts turned to the room in which she used to paint before she went to Paris, and to a subject, which she had had to abandon for lack of skill to carry it out. Having no song of their own, bullfinches can learn tunes more easily than other birds—two tunes, but not more; if they are taught a third they forget the first, and if they are taught a fourth, they forget the second, their musical memory being limited to two, and these are imparted to them by means of a bird organ. She had never seen one of these bird organs, but imagined it to be set in motion by the turning of a handle, a sort of miniature hurdy-gurdy, the purpose of which would be difficult to make plain in a painting. Not difficult, but impossible, she said to herself, and her thoughts turned to a flute, and afterwards to a flageolet. And having come to a definite conception of her picture, she engaged a model, and had nearly finished before it struck her that girls do not play a pastoral instrument of a sort once associated with shepherds and of late with gate-keepers. A boy is more patient, she said; a girl would not sit hour after hour playing the same tune. And from that moment she lost interest in the chubby, blue-eyed, flaxen-haired girl, who held the flageolet in her lips, sucking the mouthpiece as she

might a sugar stick, but with less interest. I ought to have had a boy, but it is too late to change now; and she continued in the hope that nobody would notice the discrepancy. After all, she said, if the painting be good—— But the bitter thought that her model should have been a boy filtered into the painting, poisoning it, and at the end of a week there was no more room for hope. She had spoilt her picture, and having spoilt it she might as well scrape it out and begin again, this time from a boy. The flaxen-haired girl might have a brother! She had, but the brother reminded Etta of his sister, and she preferred to make a fresh start, meeting with a child in Sutton who was the very model she had had in her mind from the first. The child's mother brought him next day to the Manor House, and whilst making a drawing preparatory to painting, her thoughts often turned to Ralph Hoskin, whom she had met in the National Gallery in the very beginning of her career, before she knew anything of her craft. Ralph could help her. But will he come to Sutton if I write to him?

She fell to thinking whether they were enemies or friends, and to discover which she began to recall the story of their friendship, how he had stopped before her easel and complimented her on her work, one of Gainsborough's landscapes. He was much admired among the copyists in the National Gallery, for he was not an ordinary copyist. He had a studio of his own, exhibited at the Royal Academy, and only came to the National occasionally, in exceptional circumstances, to make a copy for himself or for a patron whom he wished to oblige. Nobody's copies were so free as his, for his object always was to catch the spirit of the original rather than the special handicraft of the artist. She remembered how flattered she was by his notice of

her picture, and how she had asked him to criticise, saying: I am only a beginner, and you can be of such help. You have got the background wrong, he said; if you will let me have your palette I will mix you a tone. She handed him the palette and stood by, full of anxiety, while he took off a muddy grey with the knife. There, it's better now, he said, surveying the picture, his head on one side. And they had walked through the galleries talking of Turner and Claude, Ralph saying that he liked Claude, for he was nearer to Nature; there was less fake. Turner's fake was good fake, but—he had to exclude the burnt-sienna foregrounds.

She didn't think he liked her, not at first; he didn't seem even to see her. He stood staring, thinking, and anxious to help him out she began to argue with him, saying that the Turner he admired was merely a strip of sea with some fishing boats. I have seen it myself a hundred times, she said, at Brighton, at Westgate, just like that, only not quite so dark. Turner didn't copy, he transposed, Ralph answered. I am afraid I don't express myself very well, but what I mean is that the more realistic you are the better, as long as you transpose; but there must always be a transposition of tone. Look at the Jew merchant; he rises up grand and mysterious as a pyramid. You can't say where the picture begins or ends; the Jew rises out of the darkness like a vision. Look at his robe; a few folds, that is all, and yet he is completely dressed. And his hand, how large, how beautiful! Don't you see, don't you understand? Ralph spoke with a low, gentle voice; it was pleasant to think of his voice. She had never heard anybody talk so winningly before; and feeling that she must not allow him to pass out of her reach, she said that she hoped he would come to her easel on the next students' day. For now that I have had your

help, I don't think I shall ever be able to do without it.

She had always liked Ralph, and now in the great difficulty of the modelling of the boy's blowing cheeks, she began to consider how she might get him back again. But would he be satisfied with her friendship? Ah, that was it! And after telling the boy, her model, to continue blowing the flageolet till she told him to stop, she took note of the light and shade; and having assimilated him as she thought he should be portrayed on the canvas, she began to paint, thinking at intervals of a delightful morning that she and Ralph had spent in the Green Park. It was whilst watching the ducks balancing themselves like little boats on the waves, that he had told her his mother once kept a paper shop in Brixton, and that he used to draw behind the counter on every scrap of paper, till one day a man connected with one of the great newspapers took some two or three of his drawings to show to the Editor, who was much struck by them. If a boy can draw like that, he said, without being taught, what will he be able to do when he gets some instruction? Everybody, Ralph said, as they stood on the bridge looking into the water, believes in instruction, not that he can be instructed himself, but that he can instruct somebody else. It's either in you or it isn't. If a duck had any more than: Quack, quack, in his bill, he would speak it.

Her model asked Etta if he might leave off blowing the flageolet, and she answered: Of course, my dear boy, you can; I had forgotten all about it; and you can rest yourself. The boy rose with some difficulty from his chair, crying: Oh, Lord! pins and needles! And whilst he walked about the studio, Etta remembered the reasons that had decided her to go to Paris with Elsie Lawrence and Cissy Clive. It had seemed unkind to her to leave Ralph, but if she wasn't going to

marry him it would be better for her to go away for a time, for in no other way could she free herself from him. He had asked her to marry him, and as she did not feel that she could marry him, she had gone to Paris to learn painting. Had he not said it was the only place where painting could be learnt? So it was his fault, to some extent, that she had left London. She had written to him from Paris, and, she was prepared to admit, more affectionately than she would have done in pleasanter circumstances; for she was not happy in France, nor very well, and in one letter she wrote about her great loneliness and of the joy it would be were he suddenly to draw aside the curtain and seek her out among the students. He had taken her at her word and come over, and she remembered how startled she was when one of the monitors handed her Ralph's card, saying she would find him in the ante-room. She had written to him out of the impulse of the moment; his arrival was provoking, but there was no escape from him now. And they had gone downstairs together, and after walking about the streets in the neighbourhood of the Place de la Bourse, she proposed a café to him; and once out of the heat and noise of the street, some of her old liking for him had returned, though indeed she was annoyed with herself for having written the letter, and with him for having taken her at her word so easily.

As she painted, she could see herself in her thought laying out her drawings on the café table, and Ralph taking them up one after the other, criticising them perfunctorily, for, as she soon perceived, he had not come to Paris to teach her drawing, but to ask her to marry him. She took pleasure in recalling his words: I have read your letters a thousand times, till at last I felt that I couldn't go on reading them without seeing

you, till I began to be afraid that you would find somebody here to fall in love with, somebody whom you would prefer to me. Have you? She remembered her very words: I don't know that I have. But unabashed by them, he had asked her to marry him. You mean now, in Paris? Why not, Etta? If you haven't met anybody you like better, you know. And give up my painting just at the time I'm beginning to get on! I'd give anything to draw like Doucet. You don't know him—a student of the Beaux Arts. Ralph did not think that even if she could draw like Doucet, she would be any nearer painting a picture. A man in love hardly knows what he is saying, and they had left the café, Ralph pleading, saying that he would wait if she would only promise. And it was in the rue Vivienne, by the Café Vivienne (Davau was there, drinking coffee), that Ralph began to plead so earnestly that she had to make an end of it. She remembered her words: I really must send you away now. That was all. So you won't promise to marry me? No, I cannot marry you. His face darkened. I cannot live without you, he said, and frightened at the thought of his suicide, she had tried to dissuade him, saying: You have your art to live for. You're no longer a sentimental boy. You've got your man's life to lead. You must think of it. But the words had barely passed her lips when it occurred to her that his was perhaps one of those narrow, gentle natures that cannot outlive a disappointment. He had never loved a woman before—all he knew of women was one of his models.

The sound of a flageolet recalled Etta from the memories of her unkindness to Ralph in Paris, for she admitted to herself that she had been unkind. Would you mind, Miss, if I was to say something to you about the bird? You tell me that you're going to paint a

bullfinch into this cage, and that he is learning a tune off me. Now, I could play the flageolet much better if there was a real bullfinch, and I knows where you can get one for one-and-six; and then it would be a real picture, painted from me learning the bullfinch a tune on the flageolet. What do you say to paying one-and-six for the bird, Miss? You see, he 'll be listening, and will stay quiet on his perch for you. You are a clever little boy, Etta answered; you can bring the bullfinch with you to-morrow.

IV

But in spite of the work that she did upon it, the picture did not progress; instead of going forwards, it seemed to go backwards. She was in trouble in turn with the background, the bird cage, and then the bird. She could not get the action of the cheeks blowing, nor the movement of the fingers on the flageolet, and after repeated efforts the picture began to show signs of weariness, becoming like woolly cotton in the whites, and in the blacks dim and lustreless. She lay awake thinking about her picture, and every morning before she finished dressing, the canvas was wheeled into the light in the hope that yesterday's judgment of it was at fault. Sometimes she thought one thing and sometimes another, and all the time her heart misgave her. I shall never get it right, she said to herself, not without help. I want criticism. And her thoughts going back to the studio, she began to wonder what the Professor would say if she could summon him to her aid. Any one of the leading students could criticise her picture from a painter's point of view, and what would she not give to get it! But in England she knew nobody who could tell her whether she should scrape it down or start afresh on a new canvas, nobody but Ralph, and she was not cer-

tain that he would come down if she wrote to ask him, for Cissy and Elsie held that she had treated Ralph cruelly; he no doubt thought so himself, but that was several months ago, and she had never known a man who did not respond if she held up her little finger. And it was in this conviction that she went up to London one morning, telling her brother she must copy a certain picture in the National Gallery. He asked her why she felt obliged to copy it, and she answered petulantly that she could not explain. Only a painter would understand, she said, and fell to thinking that she would not walk round the students asking for news of Ralph Hoskin; being well known in the Gallery, if she began to copy somebody would come to speak to her, Ralph's name would crop up in the course of conversation, and she would get news of him without asking for it.

Nobody, however, came to talk to her. All her old acquaintances were away. But Etta was as patient as she was resolute in her flirtations, and she continued copying the Greuze till one day an acquaintance, an occasional copyist in the Gallery, caught sight of her; and she learnt from Miss Brand that Ralph had not been seen in the Gallery for more than a year. You know that he has been ill? asked Miss Brand. No; I was in France and have been ill myself and am only just recovering. But Ralph, I hope, is not seriously ill? Lung trouble, Miss Brand answered. That is always serious, Etta replied, and when her friend had left her she sat staring at her Greuze, till unable to endure its silly sentimentality any longer, she locked up her paint-box and left the Gallery, walking without seeing or hearing, even to the danger of getting herself run over, asking herself if her refusal to marry him had anything to do with his illness. She hoped it had not,

admitting at the end of a little sensuous meditation on the bridge in St. James's Park, that she might have led him to expect she would marry him sooner or later. But she couldn't have made him happy; she was not sure that she could make any man happy.

As she crossed the open space in front of Buckingham Palace, the desire to see him laid hold of her, and hailing a hansom she drove to his studio. The door was opened by a young woman who looked like a servant, but Etta, not deceived by her appearance, guessed her to be one of his models. I've come, she said, from the National Gallery, where I heard that Mr. Hoskin is ill. Can I see him? He has just dozed off, the young woman answered. I dare not awake him, but I'll give him a message. Give him my card and say I would like to see him. Stay, I'll write a word upon it. And whilst Etta wrote on the card the girl watched her—her face full of suspicion, and when she read the name an indiscreet Oh escaped from her, and Etta knew that Ralph had spoken of her. His mistress, no doubt, she thought; she wouldn't be here nursing him if she wasn't. And lowering her eyes she murmured: Thank you, reaching the end of the street humiliated and angry, humiliated that the girl should have seen through her so easily, angry that Ralph should have spoken about her to his mistress; for she was sure that the woman was, or had been, his mistress. She regretted having asked to see Ralph, but she had asked for an appointment—she could hardly get out of it now. . . . She would have to meet that woman again; but she wanted to see Ralph. Ralph, I suppose, told her the truth, she thought. A moment's reflection convinced her that he probably had, and reassured she went to bed, wondering when she would get a letter. She might get one in the morning.

The first letter she opened, read:

MADAM,—Mr. Hoskin begs me to thank you for your kind enquiry. He is feeling a little stronger and will be glad to see you. His best time is in the afternoon, about three o'clock. Could you make it convenient to call about that time? I think it right to warn you that it would be well not to speak of anything likely to excite him, for the doctor says that all hope of his recovery depends upon his being kept quiet.—I am, madam, Yours truly,

ELLEN GIBBS.

Ellen Gibbs; so that is her name, thought Etta. There was a note of authority in the letter which did not escape her. She did not like meeting this woman, but she wanted to see Ralph; and an expression of vindictiveness came into her cunning eyes. If she dares to try to oppose me, she'll soon find out her mistake. She has been his mistress; I have not, and shall get the best of her easily. To-morrow! This letter was written last night, so I have to go to see him to-day, this afternoon, at three o'clock. I shall have to go up after luncheon by the two o'clock train. That will get me there by three. Now I wonder if he is really dying? If I were to go to see him and he were to recover, it would mean beginning it over again. But would it? And why do base thoughts and calculations enter my head? I don't know, for I do not call them, nor do their promptings affect me. I am going to see him because I was once very fond of him, because I caused him, through no fault of mine, a great deal of suffering. I know he'd like to see me before he dies, that's why I'm going, and yet horrid thoughts will come into my head. To hear me thinking, anybody would imagine that it was only on account of my own vanity that I wanted to see him, whereas it's quite the contrary. As a rule, I hate sick people, and I'm sure it is most disagreeable to me to meet that woman.

The two o'clock train took her to town, a hansom from Victoria to Chelsea, and she walked up the street thinking of the woman who would open the door to her. There was something about her she didn't like. But it didn't matter; she would be shown in at once, and of course left alone with Ralph. . . . Supposing the woman were to sit there all the while! But it was too late now; she had knocked. I've come to see Mr. Hoskin. Feeling that her speech was too abrupt, she added: I hope he is better to-day. Ellen answered that Mr. Hoskin seemed a little better and was in the studio. Etta expected to find him dawdling from easel to easel, and was shocked to catch sight of him in a small iron bed, hardly more than a foot from the floor, his large features wasted by illness. His eyes glowed, and Ellen placed a chair by his bedside, saying that she was going out, but would not be away for more than half an hour. As soon as the door closed, Etta took the thin hand extended to her.

Oh, Ralph, I'm so sorry to find you ill. But you're better to-day, aren't you?

Yes, I feel a little better to-day. It was good of you to come.

I came at once, Ralph.

How did you hear I was ill? We've not written to each other for a long while.

I heard it in the National. Miss Brand told me.

You know her? I remember, she wrote about the new pictures for an American paper.

Yes; how familiar it sounds; those dear days in the National. Ralph's eyes were fixed upon her. She could not bear their wistfulness, and she lowered hers, saying: She told me you were ill.

But when did you return from France? Tell me.

About six weeks ago. I fell ill the moment I got back.

What was the matter?

I had overdone it. I had overworked myself. I had let myself get run down. The doctor said that I didn't eat enough meat; you know, I never did care for meat.

I remember.

When I got better I was ordered to the sea-side; then I went on a visit to some friends and didn't get back to Sutton till Christmas. We had a lot of stupid people staying with us. I couldn't do any work while they were in the house. When they left I began a picture, but I tried too difficult a subject and got into trouble with my drawing. You said I'd never succeed. I often thought of what you said. Well, then I went to the National. Ethel Brand told me you were ill, that you had been ill for some time, at least a month. A thin smile curled Ralph's red lips, and his eyes seemed to grow more wistful. I've been ill for more than a month, he said. But no matter. Ethel Brand told you, and——?

Of course I couldn't stay at the National. I felt I must see you, and my feet turned towards St. James's Park, to the little bridge where we used to stand talking of painting and each other. She looked at him sideways, so that her bright brown eyes might have all their charm. His pale eyes, wistful and dying, were fixed upon her, not intently as a few moments before, but vaguely, and the thought stirred in her mind that he might die before her eyes. In that event, what was she to do? Are you listening? she said. Oh yes, I'm listening, he answered. His smile was reassuring, and she continued: Suddenly I felt that—that I must see you. I felt I must know what was the matter, so I took a cab and came straight here. Your servant——

You mean Ellen.

I thought she was your servant. She said that you were lying down and couldn't be disturbed. She didn't

seem to wish me to see you or to know what was the matter.

I was asleep when you called yesterday, but when I heard of your visit I told her to write the letter which you received this morning. It was kind of you to come.

Kind of me to come! You must think badly of me if you think I could have stayed away. But now tell me, Ralph, what does the doctor say? Have you had the best medical advice? Are you in want of anything? Can I do anything? Pray don't hesitate. You know that I was, that I am, very fond of you, that I would do anything. You have been ill a long while now—what is the matter?

Thank you, dear. Things must take their course. What that course is it is impossible to say. I've had excellent medical advice, and Ellen takes care of me.

But what is your illness? Ethel Brand told me that you caught a bad cold about a month ago. Perhaps a specialist——

Yes, I had a bad attack of influenza about a month or six weeks ago, and I hadn't strength, the doctor said, to recover from it. I have been in bad health for some time. I've been disappointed. My painting hasn't gone very well lately. That was a disappointment; and disappointment, I think, is as often the cause of a man's death as anything else. The doctors give it a name: influenza, paralysis of the brain, or failure of the heart's action; but these are the superficial causes of death. There is oftener a deeper reason, one which medical science is unable to take into account.

Oh, Ralph, you mean me! Don't say that I am the cause. It was not my fault. If I broke my engagement, it was because I knew I could not have made you happy. There's no reason to be jealous, it wasn't for any other

man. I was really very fond of you. It wasn't my fault.

No, dear, it wasn't your fault. It wasn't anybody's fault. We were not in luck's way, that's all.

Etta longed for tears, but her eyes remained dry, and rising from the chair Ellen Gibbs had given her, she wandered round the studio, examining the various canvases. In one, a woman who had just left her bath passed her arms into the sleeves of a long, white wrapper, and Etta admired its naturalness. But she was more interested in the fact that the picture was painted from the woman who had opened the door to her. She sits for the figure and attends on him when he is ill! She must be his mistress; since when, I wonder.

How do you like it, Etta?

Very much. It is beautifully drawn, so natural and so original. How did you think of that movement? How did you think of it?

I don't know. She took the pose. I think the movement is all right.

Yes; it is a movement that happens every morning, yet no one thought of it before. How did you think of it?

I don't know; I asked her to take some poses, and it came like that. I think it is good. I'm glad you like it.

It is very different from the stupid things we draw in the studio.

I told you that you 'd do no good by going to France.

I learnt a good deal there. Everybody cannot learn by themselves, as you did. Only genius can do that.

Genius! A few little pictures. . . . I think I might have done something if I'd had the chance. I should have liked to finish that picture. It is a good beginning. I never did better.

Dearest, you will live to paint your picture. I want

you to finish it. I want you to live for my sake. I will buy that picture.

There's only one thing I should care to live for.

And that you shall have.

Then I'll try to live. He raised himself a little in bed. His eyes were fixed on her and he tried hard to believe. I'm afraid, he said, it's too late now. She watched him with the eyes she knew he loved, and though ashamed of the question, she could not put it back: Would you sooner live for me than for that picture?

One never knows what one would choose, he said. Such speculations are always vain, and never were they vainer than now. . . . But I'm glad you like the movement. It doesn't matter even if I never finish it. I don't think it looks bad in its present state, does it?

It is a sketch, one of those things that could not be finished. I recognise the model. *She* sat for it, didn't she?

Yes.

And you never told me? Oh, Ralph, while you were telling me you loved me, you were living with this woman!

It happened so. Things don't come out as straight or as nice as we'd like them to; that's the way things come out in life—a bit crooked, tangled, cracked. I couldn't have done otherwise. That's the way things happened to come out. There's no other explanation.

And if I'd consented to marry you, you'd have put her away.

Etta, don't scold me. Things happened that way.

Etta did not answer, and Ralph continued: What are you thinking of?

Of the cruelty, of the wretchedness of it all.

Why look at that side of it. If I did wrong, I've been

punished. She knows all. She has forgiven me. You can do as much. Forgive me; kiss me. I've never kissed you.

I cannot kiss you now. I hear her coming. Wipe those tears away. The doctor said that you were to be kept quiet.

Shall I see you again?

I don't think I can come again. She'll be here.

Etta! What difference can it make?

We shall see. . . .

The door opened. Ellen came in, and Etta got up to go. I hope you've enjoyed your walk, Miss Gibbs?

Yes, thank you. I haven't been out for some days.

Nursing is very fatiguing. . . . Good-bye, Mr. Hoskin. I hope I shall soon hear that you're better. Perhaps Miss Gibbs will write.

Yes, I'll write; but I'm afraid Mr. Hoskin has been talking too much. Let me open the door for you.

V

Two days afterwards she received a letter from Ellen Gibbs:

MADAM,—It is my sad duty to inform you that Mr. Ralph Hoskin died this afternoon at two o'clock. He begged me to write and thank you for the violets you sent him. The funeral will take place on Monday. If you come here to-morrow, you will see him before he is put into his coffin—I am, Yours truly,

ELLEN GIBBS.

The desire to see her dead lover was an instinct, and the journey from Sutton to Chelsea was unperceived by her; and she did not recover from the febrile obedience her desire imposed until Ellen opened the studio door.

I received a letter from you—Etta began. Yes, I know; come in. Etta hated the plain, middle-class appearance and dress of this girl. She hated the tone of her voice, and walked without answering into the studio, drawing back affrighted, so different is death from life. But catching sight of the violets, she recovered herself, and overcome, she stood watching the dead man, forgetful whether Ellen knew or was ignorant of what her relations might have been, remembering only that he was dead. And the desire to say a prayer falling upon her, she knelt by the bedside.

Don't let me disturb you, said Ellen. When you have finished——

Will you not say a prayer with me?

I have said my prayers. Our prayers would not mingle.

What does she mean? thought Etta. Our prayers would not mingle! Why? Because I'm a pure woman and she isn't? I wonder if she meant that. I hope she does not intend any violence. Her heart throbbed with fear, her knees weakened, she thought she would faint. And resolved to faint on the slightest provocation, she rose from her knees and stood facing the other woman, who stood between her and the door. Etta tried to speak, but words stuck fast in her throat, and it was some time before her terror allowed her to see that the expression on Ellen's face was not one of anger, but of resignation. She was safe! She has pretty eyes, thought Etta, a weak, nervous creature; I can do with her what I like. If she thinks that she can get the better of me, I'll very soon show her that she is mistaken. Of course, if it came to violence I could do nothing but scream, for I'm not very strong.

Well, Ellen said, I hope you're satisfied. He died thinking of you. I hope you're satisfied.

Mr. Hoskin and I were intimate friends. It is only natural that he should think of me.

We were happy until you came. You've made dust and ashes of my life. Why did you take the trouble to do this? You were not in love with him, and I did you no injury.

I didn't know of your existence till the other day. I heard that——

That I was his mistress? Well, so I was. It appears that you were not. But I should like to know which of us two is the most virtuous, which has done the least harm. I made him happy; you killed him.

This is madness!

No, it is not madness. I know all about you. Ralph told me everything.

It surprises me very much that he should have spoken about me. It was not like him. I hope that he didn't tell you—that he didn't suggest that there were any improper relations between us.

I dare say that you were virtuous, more or less, as far as your own body is concerned.

I cannot discuss such questions with you, Etta said timidly, and swinging her parasol vaguely, she tried to pass Ellen by. But it was difficult to get by. The picture she had admired the other day blocked the way.

Yes, said Ellen, in her sad, doleful voice, you can look at it. I sat for it. I'm not ashamed; and perhaps I did more good by sitting than you'll do with your painting. . . . But look at him—there he lies. He might have been a great artist if he hadn't met you, and I should have been a happy woman. Now I've nothing to live for. . . . You said that you didn't know of my existence till the other day. But you knew that in making that man love you, you were robbing another woman.

That is very subtle.

You knew that you did not love him, and that it could end only in unhappiness. It has ended in death.

Etta looked at the cold face, so clay-like, and the horror of the situation creeping over her, she lost strength to go, and listened meekly to Ellen: He smiled a little—it was a little, sad smile—when he told me that I was to write saying that he would be glad if you would come to see him when he was dead. I think I know what was passing in his mind—he hoped that his death might be a warning to you. Not many men die of broken hearts, but one never knows; one did, look at him and take your lesson.

I assure you that we were merely friends. He liked me, I know—he loved me, if you will; I could not help that. Etta drew on the floor of the studio with her parasol. I am very sorry; it is most unfortunate. I did nothing wrong. I'm sure he never suggested—

How that one idea does run in your head! I wonder if your thoughts are equally chaste. I read you in the first glance. One glance was enough. Your eyes tell a mean little soul; you try to resist sometimes, but your nature turns naturally to evil. There are people like that.

If I had done what you seem to think I ought to have done, he would have abandoned you. And Etta looked at her rival triumphantly.

That would have been better than what has happened. Then there would have been only one heart broken.

Etta hated the woman for the humiliation she was imposing upon her, and at the same time she could not but feel admiration for such single-heartedness. And noticing on Etta's face the change of expression, but misinterpreting it, Ellen said: I can read you through and through. You have wrecked two lives. Oh, that

anybody should be so wicked, that anybody should delight in wickedness! I cannot understand it.

You are accusing me wrongly. But let me go. It is not likely that we shall arrive at any understanding.

Go, then.

Ellen threw herself on a chair by the bedside, and Etta whisked her black crape dress out of the studio.

VI

She began new pictures, attributing every failure to the death of Ralph, saying to herself or to Ethel Brand (if she happened to be a visitor at the Manor House, which she frequently was during the winter): Ralph was the only painter in England, at least the only one I knew, who could help me, who could criticise my work from a painter's point of view. You know what I mean? Ethel Brand, whose thoughts went into music rather than into painting, answered that her desire to compose ceased practically with Rubenstein's death. She had often held out against his emendations, which seemed to her alien from her idea, but she generally gave in, accepting them in the end. But are there not many musicians who can correct grammatical mistakes, though they can do nothing else? Etta asked, and Ethel agreed that there were, but she felt that her life as a composer was ended. One never knows, she added, and there are times when I feel that I have not said all I have to say in music. For the moment, however, I am not writing music, but about music in the newspapers—it pays better, and to musical criticisms I have added art criticisms; having lived a great deal with artists, I know how to do it. You could help me, Etta. Etta said that she would be delighted to do so, and in their walks round the galleries the women began to take pleasure in each other's company, and the intervals that divided them began to seem longer and

longer, till at length a flat in Paris was spoken of. Ethel said that there were some nice apartments in the rue Hauteville, off the boulevard Montmartre. Which would not be far, dear, from your studio. I once thought of taking a flat in that street myself, but the flats were too large for one person.

Etta smiled upon her friend's project, but the idea was not ripe in her yet, and without knowing why, she lingered on in Sutton till the spring. It was not till the early spring that the nostalgia of the boulevards began to take possession of her, and then it was she who pressed Ethel to come away at once, saying that the Manor House and Harold had again become wearisome to her, and the whole neighbourhood oppressive. There isn't a room in the house in which I can paint, she argued when Harold tried to dissuade her. Moreover, I cannot live in Sutton. If you will take a house in London. . . . I must live where painting is being done. I cannot afford two houses, he answered, and a month later Etta and Ethel were furnishing a flat in the rue Hauteville, a burden that Ethel took upon her own shoulders so that Etta should be free to attend to her work in the studio, whither she went every morning at eight, more intent upon painting than ever, or maybe more intent upon the studio, which in the person of its proprietor, M. Davau, attracted Etta. She was always talking of him, asking him to dinner at the flat, buying boxes for the theatre, hiring a carriage to take them, and detaining him in the café afterwards for as long as he consented to remain. She never seemed to weary of him. A strange choice indeed Davau seemed to Ethel, and she often wondered if Etta loved the great, black-bearded Southerner with conviction. Very often after he had left them, speaking out of their meditations, one would admit to the other that for some reason which escaped them his beard and

his belly were forgotten in the charm of his personality. But in what did this personality consist? He was not a great artist; as an artist he was a failure. What then? Ethel asked, and Etta answered: He seems to know his own mind; he is true to himself, a sensualist, I think, unfortunately, but he has himself well in hand. I don't like fat men, nor hairy hands, but——

The sentence was left unfinished, and both women fell to thinking of the pleasant stories that Davau told of the day when he was a shepherd boy and afterwards a great wrestler in the South. In wrestling he and his cousin overthrew all competitors, and when he was not wrestling he was drawing. And by spending the money he gained in the circus, he had educated himself enough to come to Paris and to make a success in the Salon des Refusés. Alfred de Musset's poem supplied him with a subject—the moment when Rolla leaves his mistress's bed to shoot himself, having spent his last louis on the supper they had enjoyed before returning home, the girl innocent of her lover's intention to take his life at daybreak. Davau's picture represented Rolla at the window pointing to the sunrise. His mistress still slept, and it was the girl's carefully painted petticoat, thrown over a chair, that caused the scandal and the success. Davau told Etta and Ethel how a critic had said, *que Rolla montrait le soleil pendant qu'elle montrait la lune*; and to explain what he meant he asked for a piece of paper and made a sketch of his picture, making them both laugh. But a success like Davau's Rolla does not give a painter an income, and Davau, reduced like Rolla to his last hundred francs, bethought himself of an exhibition of wrestling. A circus was built on a waste plot in the centre of the town, and all the friends of Davau's youth came to Paris to initiate the Parisians in *la lutte Romaine*. Coeur de Lion and Bras de Fer were minor attractions, Davau relying

on L'Homme Masqué to fill his booth. He entered to wrestle with the victor in all the contests and had never been overthrown, and it became the brag of Paris to discover his name. His cabriolet was overtaken miles away in the country, but there was nobody in it; and attempts were made to bribe the wrestlers to drag the mask from his face, but the heralds intervened. And then it began to be noticed, Davau said, that I disappeared from the auditorium when L'Homme Masqué was in the arena, and to show that I was not L'Homme Masqué I took a seat in full view of the public; and on that very night it so happened that L'Homme Masqué only just escaped defeat. The man who was nearly overthrown was your cousin, Etta interjected. You were L'Homme Masqué in turns. Davau did not answer, and he entertained the ladies in the rue Hauteville till nearly midnight with tales of *Coeur de Lion*, *Bras de Fer*, and *Poitrine de Taureau*.

Etta was not satisfied with Davau's visits to the rue Hauteville; she wished to show in the studio that she held him in tether, and her attempts to exhibit her power were her undoing. From the very first day that she ran across the studio and took him by the sleeve, saying: Now you must come and look at my drawing, the crafty Southerner determined to put her aside. Her invitations to dinner were refused; he never accompanied her again to the theatre; he was polite, but distant always, and Etta confessed her perplexities to Ethel, who could not dissuade her. The difficulty and danger of this wooing whetted her appetite for victory, and she might have pursued her quest with ridiculous attentions if it had not been dropped in conversation with some of the other women in the studio during the lunch hour that Mlle. Berge was Davau's mistress.

At first Etta could not believe that she had been

deceived, but once put on the track of the truth, she remembered a hundred things that had passed unnoticed at the time, words and incidents. And these rousing in her a passion of hatred, she began to vent her hatred of Mlle. Berge, making insulting remarks in her hearing and relating conversations she had had with Mlle. Berge, who had been foolish enough once to tell her that she had prettier thighs than any of the models. An excellent subject for caricature this was, which Etta availed herself of, sketching upon Mlle. Berge's drawings. Her hatred of Davau was as unmeasured; she told stories about him, relating that she had been obliged to refuse to see him in the rue Hauteville, that he used to dine with them there, but his conduct was so extraordinary one night that she could not receive him any more. Davau heard all these stories without making any protest, and Etta rejoiced, unsuspecting that when she came to renew her subscription to the studio, he would tell her that he was sorry but he could not accept it, for he wished to reduce the number of lady pupils.

VII

Expulsion from the studio made shipwreck of her life in Paris; she took lessons in French, began a novel, and paid many visits to the Louvre in search of a picture that would interest her to copy, and meeting there a student from Davau's she learnt from him that a subscription was being promoted by the pupils to present Davau with a testimonial. A subscription entitled a subscriber to a place at the banquet, and at the banquet Davau could not do else than say to Etta: I think this is an occasion on which old differences should be forgotten. If you care to return to my studio, you will find it open to you. And to show that he wished to let bygones be bygones, he often came to help her with her drawing, whereat she

rejoiced, thinking that during Mlle. Berge's absence, she would be able to turn defeat into victory. But why had Mlle. Berge left the studio? A very bitter hatred rose up in her heart when she learnt that Davau was living in a handsome flat with Mlle. Berge, his mistress and help-mate, whom he was soon to wed. Harsh words rose up in Etta's mind, but remembering the price her former indiscretions had cost her she began a letter of congratulation, and would have written it probably if Ethel Brand's mother had not come to Paris to fetch her daughter home.

Ethel had fallen out of health, and her departure gave Etta an excuse for leaving the flat in the rue Hauteville. She could say that it was too large, too expensive, and too lonely. She hated the flat, for it was associated in her mind with Davau, and to forget him she went to live in a boarding-house on the other side of the water, where Cissy was staying. But at the end of the first quarter Etta thought the neighborhood did not suit her, and she wandered from boarding-house to boarding-house, from hotel to hotel, to take at last another flat, one in which there was a studio, and to spend a good deal of money on models, frames, and costumes. But nothing she did satisfied her, and convinced that she must improve her drawing she joined a drawing-class—one run on the same lines as the studio in the Passage des Panoramas, and for three months she bore the strain of the long working hours, till one morning, near the middle of the fourth month, she paused in her dressing and sank into a chair, unable to summon enough strength to draw on her stockings. In this hour of mental and physical weakness life seemed hopeless. She did not doubt her own genius, but she could not do else than doubt her own strength. There it was. She was without strength to rise at seven in the morning, to arrive at the studio at eight and to draw there

till five, like Doucet, and after all, hundreds had drawn better than Doucet. With Doucet's skill, she thought she could do something better than Doucet. But there, she had neither his skill nor his strength, not even strength to pull on her stockings, only just enough to pull them off and roll herself into bed again and rest, which she did, lying between sleeping and waking till the maid knocked at her door and handed her a letter from Elsie.

DEAR ETTA,—Here we are again in Barbizon, painting in the day and dancing in the evening, and there are a nice lot of fellows here, one or two very clever ones. I have already picked up a lot of hints. How we did waste our time in that studio. Square brush work, drawing by the masses—what rot! I suppose you have abandoned it all long ago. Cissy is here; she has thrown over Hopwood Blunt for good and all, and is at present interested in a division-of-the-tones man. A clever fellow, but not nearly so good-looking as mine. The inn stands in a large garden, and we dine and walk after dinner under the trees, and watch the stars come out. There's a fellow here who might interest you; his painting would, even if he failed to respond to the gentle platonism of your flirtations. The forest, too, would interest you. It is an immense joy. I'm sure you want change of air. Life here is very cheap, only five francs, room and meals—breakfast and dinner, everything included except coffee.

The letter dropped upon her knees, and a wonderful rejoicement began in her heart, so surprising and so spontaneous that she must stop in her packing and ask herself if it were true that she had been pursuing things long after they had ceased to interest her, dead things, she said. But is my interest in painting, once

so vital, gone? But was it ever very vital? she asked herself, and unable to find an answer to the question, she put it aside, it seeming to her that all search for reasons might check the joy rising, bubbling, effervescing in her heart. Why ask myself questions, for am I not going to Barbizon to get away from questions, from ideas? But what is Barbizon but painting, tones, relations, composition? And stopping in her picking and choosing of hats and gowns, she fell to thinking that she would like to escape into some other world in which there were no pictures, or only good ones, it being against the law to paint bad ones, and as nobody could paint good ones any longer men and women would be devoted to other things. But to what? She did not know, nor care, for she was going to Barbizon, to a life in which there would be no painting, at least none for her. Again the prospect of an escape from Paris into the open air possessed her, and she said: Though they are painters in Barbizon, they are but landscape painters. Barbizon is without studios; the forest is the studio. And her face darkening quickly, she added: And there is no Davau. A moment after her eyes returned to Elsie's letter, and she read that she was not to go to Fontainebleau, but to Melun, where she would find an omnibus waiting that would take her to Barbizon; or, if she did not mind the expense, she could take a fly, which would be pleasanter and quicker. But be sure not to miss the five o'clock express, the letter said, and she felt that Elsie's letter had restored her to health and strength. Soon after she was out of the house in the street, making purchases, returning with them, enjoying every minute: the packing of her clothes, the drive through Paris to the Gare de Lyons, the train journey, and the long plains that Millet had painted.

VIII

So a formal avenue of trees leads out of the town of Melun, she said, and the plain is girdled with a dark green belt of distant forest. At the cross roads she noticed a still more formal avenue, trees planted in a single line, curving like a regiment of soldiers marching across a plain that seemed to be incompletely cleared of forest. She missed the familiar hedgerows which make England like a garden, and when the carriage entered, half an hour later, a gaunt, white village, Etta was glad to learn that it was not Barbizon. The driver mentioned the name, but she did not catch it, for she was thinking of certain Surrey villages where honeysuckle, wistaria or clematis, clamber about the porches, and sunflowers raise gaudy heads over pretty palings. Barbizon, she learnt from a somewhat persistent driver, was still a mile away; it lay at the end of the plain, and when the carriage entered the long street it rocked over huge stones so violently that she was nearly thrown into the roadway and had to call to the driver to go slower; but he smiled, just as if he had not understood her, and pointing with his whip, said that the hotel Mademoiselle wanted was at the end of the village, on the verge of the forest.

A few moments after, the carriage drew up before an iron gateway, and Etta saw a small house at the bottom of a garden, where a numerous company was dining beneath the branches of a cedar. Elsie and Cissy ran to meet their friend; and all through dinner her impression was of English girls dressed in cheap linen dresses and men in rough suits and flowing neckties. She was given some soup, and when the plate of veal was handed round and Elsie and Cissy had exhausted their first store of questions, she was introduced to Morton Mitchell, who

leaned back in his chair till he broke it. Another was given to him, and Etta liked his brusque, but withal well-bred manner, and was sorry to leave the table when dinner was over, but could not do else than follow Elsie and Cissy, who wanted to talk to her. And the three marched across the grass plot, their arms about each other's waists, and whilst questioning Etta about herself and telling her about themselves, they frequently looked where their lovers sat smoking, Etta's attention drawn to a girl who hung over Morton, desirous that he should listen only to her. Elsie and Cissy whispered Rose Turner's story, and Etta thought: What a fool. . . .

And when the attractions of mazagans and les petits verres were over and the young men joined the ladies, Cissy and Elsie forgot Etta, who had turned into the house to view, so she said, the walls painted with landscapes, still life, nude figures, rustic and elegiac subjects; and she remained looking at the pictures in the hope that Morton Mitchell would catch her admiring his. But he did not return, and she was beginning to wonder if he were still listening to Rose Turner, when she heard somebody say: Do you like being alone? I am used to being alone, she answered, with a smile of welcome, for she recognised the voice as Morton's.

Use is a second nature; I will not interrupt your solitude.

But sometimes one gets tired of solitude.

Would you like to share your solitude? You can have half of mine.

I'm sure it's very kind of you, but—— It was on Etta's tongue to ask him what he had done with Rose Turner, but she said instead: Where does your solitude hang out?

Chiefly in the forest.

I don't know where the others have gone.

We shall find them in the forest; we walk there every evening. We shall meet them.

How far is the forest?

At our door. We're in the forest, he said; and answering his questions, Etta followed Morton through great rocks filled with weird shadows, to where pines stood round the hill-top, with a round, yellow moon looking through them. Does it shock you, she asked, that I should prefer to work from the naked model among men?

No; nothing shocks me.

In the studio a woman puts off her sex. There's no sex in art.

I quite agree with you. There's no sex in art, and a woman would be very foolish to let anything stand between her and her art.

I'm glad you think that. I've made great sacrifices for painting.

What sacrifices?

I'll tell you one of these days when I know you better.

Will you?

The conversation paused a moment, and Etta said: How wonderful it is here! One hears the silence; it enters into one's very bones. It is a pity one cannot paint silence.

Millet painted silence. The Angelus trembles with silence and sunset.

But the silence of the moonlight is more awful. It really is very awful; I'm afraid.

Afraid of what? There's nothing to be afraid of. You asked me if I believed in Davau's. I didn't like to say; I had only just been introduced to you; but it seems to me that I know you better now. Davau's is a curse. It is the sterilisation of art. You must give up Davau's and come to work here.

I'm afraid it would make no difference. Elsie and Cissy have spent years here, and what they do does not amount to much. They wander from method to method, abandoning each in turn. I am utterly discouraged, and have made up my mind to give up painting.

What are you going to do?

I don't know. One of these days I shall find out my true vocation.

You're young, you are beautiful——

No, I'm not beautiful, but there are times when I look nice. The others do not seem to be coming back. We had better return.

They moved out of the shadows of the pines and stood looking down the sandy pathway. I never saw anything like this before, Etta continued. This is primeval. I used to walk a good deal with a friend of mine in St. James's Park.

The park where the ducks are and a little bridge. Your friend was not an artist?

Oh yes, he was, and a very clever artist, too.

Then he admired the park because you were with him.

Perhaps that had something to do with it. But the park is very beautiful.

I don't think I care much about cultivated Nature.

Don't you like a garden?

Yes, a disordered garden, a garden that has been let run wild.

They walked down the sandy pathway and came unexpectedly upon Elsie, and asked where the others were. Elsie did not know. But at that moment voices were heard, and Cissy cried from the bottom of the glade: So there you are. We've been looking for you. Looking for us! said Etta. Yes; we are going to dance. Rose will play when Etta is dancing, and when Rose is danc-

ing Etta will play. Nobody can play waltzes better than Etta. Strauss himself would listen to her playing of the Blue Danube. I'm not so sure of that, Etta answered, but I'll do my best to help Rose to whirl away her evening, and she'll do her best to help me to whirl away mine. And the evening whirled through music and moonlight till the painters began to think of the motives that awaited them in the morning.

IX

Etta was the first down. She wore a pretty, flowered dress, and her straw hat was trimmed with tremulous grasses and cornflowers. A faint sunshine floated in the wet garden. Well, you have got yourself up! cried Elsie. We don't run to anything like that here. You're going out flirting; it's easy to see that. My flirtations don't amount to much, Elsie. Kisses don't thrill me as they do you. I'm afraid I've never been what you call in love. You seem on the way there if I'm to judge by last night, Elsie answered tartly. You know, Etta, I don't believe all you say, not quite all. An almost triumphant expression came upon Etta's face, and she said: Perhaps I shall meet a man one of these days who will inspire passion in me.

I hope so. It would be a relief to all of us. I wouldn't mind subscribing to present that man with a testimonial.

I often wonder what will become of me. I've changed a good deal in the last two years. I've had a great deal of trouble.

I'm sorry you're so depressed. But we all are. The art to which we give ourselves deceives us as you deceive your lovers.

But, Elsie, you haven't been deceived. You had a picture in the Salon, and Cissy had one too.

That doesn't mean much.

But do you think that I shall ever do as much? Elsie did not think so, and the doubt caused her to hesitate. Etta perceived the hesitation, and said: Oh, there's no necessity for you to lie. I know the truth well enough. I have resolved to give up painting. I have given it up.

You've given up painting! Do you really mean it?

Yes; I feel that I must. I'm not very strong, and the long hours in the studio wear me out. What a relief your letter was—what a relief to be here!

Well, you see, something has happened. Barbizon has happened, Morton has happened.

I wonder if anything will come of it. He's a nice fellow. I like him.

You're not the first. All the women are crazy about him. He was the lover of M^érac, the actress of the Français, and it is said that she could only play Phèdre when he was in the stage-box. He always produced that effect upon her. Then he was the lover of the Marquise de la—de la Per—I can't remember the name.

Morton was talking to Rose, but Etta soon got his attention. You're going to paint in the forest, she said. I wonder what your picture is like; you haven't shown it to me.

It's all packed up. But if you're not painting with Miss Lawrence and Miss Clive you might come with me. And you'd better take your painting materials; you'll find the time hang heavily if you don't.

The very thought of painting bores me.

Well, then, if you're ready we might make a start; mine is a midday effect. I hope you're a good walker. But you'll never be able to get along in those shoes, and the dress you've on is no dress for the forest. You're dressed as for a garden-party.

It is only a little flowered muslin, there's nothing to spoil; and as for my shoes, you'll see, I shall get along all right, unless it is very far.

It is more than a mile. I shall have to take you down to the local cobbler and get you measured. I never saw such feet!

He was oddly matter of fact, and his almost childishness amused and interested Etta. With whom, she said, do you go out painting when I'm not here? Every Jack seems to have his own Jill in Barbizon.

And don't they everywhere else? It would be damned dull without.

Do you think it would? Have you always got a Jill?

I've been down on my luck lately.

Which of the women here has the most talent?

Perhaps Miss Lawrence. But Miss Clive does a nice thing occasionally.

What do you think of Miss Turner's work?

It's pretty good. She has talent. She had two pictures in the Salon last year.

Have you ever been out with her?

Yes; but why do you ask?

Because I think she likes you. She looked very miserable when she heard that we were going out together. Just as if she were going to cry. If I thought I was making another person unhappy I would sooner give up the pleasure of going out with you.

And what about me? Don't I count for anything?

I must not do a direct wrong to another. Each of us has a path to walk in, and if we deviate from our path we bring unhappiness upon ourselves and upon others. Morton stopped and looked at her; his stolid stare made her laugh and it made her like him. I wonder if I am selfish, Etta continued reflectively. Sometimes I

think I am, sometimes I think I am not. I've suffered so much; my life has been all suffering. There's no heart left in me for anything. I wonder what will become of me. I often think I shall commit suicide. Or I might go into a convent.

You'd much better commit suicide than go into a convent. Those poor devils of nuns!

You're not going to ask me to climb those rocks! said Etta. Mile after mile of rocks! What a scene, like a landscape by Salvator Rosa.

Climb that hill? You couldn't! I'll wait until our cobbler has made you a pair of boots. Bah! Isn't that desolate region of blasted oaks and sundered rocks wonderful? And they had walked but a very little way when he stopped and said: Don't you call that beautiful? And leaning against the same tree, Morton and Etta looked into the summer wood, where the trunks of the young elms rose straight, and through the pale leafage the sunlight quivered, full of the impulse of the morning. Something ran through the grass, paused, and then ran again.

What is that? Etta asked.

A squirrel, I think. Yes; he's going up that tree.

How pretty he is, his paws set against the bark.

Come this way and we shall see him better. But they caught no further sight of the squirrel, and Morton asked Etta the time. A quarter-past ten, she said, glancing at the tiny watch that she wore in a bracelet. Then we must be moving on, he answered. I ought to be at work by half-past. One can't work more than a couple of hours in this light. Etta opened her parasol, and they passed out of the wood and crossed an open space where rough grass grew in patches. You asked me just now if I ever went to England, she said, and that's my difficulty. So long as I was painting, there was a reason for my

remaining in France, but now that I've given it up——

But you've not given it up!

Yes, I have; and if I don't find something else to do, I suppose I must go back. That's what I dread. We live in Sutton. But that conveys no idea to your mind. Sutton is a little town in Surrey. It was very nice once, but now it is little better than a London suburb. My brother is a distiller. He goes to town every day by the nine o'clock, and he returns by the six o'clock. I've heard of nothing but those two trains all my life. We have many acres of ground—gardens, greenhouses, and a number of servants. Then there's the cart—I go out for drives in the cart. We have tennis parties—the neighbours, you know. And I shall have to choose whether I look after my brother's house, or marry and look after my husband's.

It must be very lonely in Sutton.

Yes, it is very lonely. There are a number of people about, but I've no friends I care for.

A moment after they passed out of the sunlight into the green shade of some beech trees. Etta closed her parasol, and swaying it to and fro amid the ferns she continued telling in a low, laughing voice of a friend of hers who read Comte, and the influence that this lady had exercised upon her. Her words floated along in a current of quiet humour, cadenced by the gentle swaying of her parasol and brought into relief by a certain intentness of manner which was peculiar to her, and which was not without charm for Morton, who became more and more conscious of her. The charm of her voice stole upon him, and once he lingered, allowing her to get a few yards in front, so that he might notice the quiet figure, a little demure and intensely itself in a yellow gown. When he first saw her, she had seemed to him a little sedate, even a little dowdy; he had feared a bore, but this she at least

was not, and her determination to paint no more announced an excellent sense of the realities of things in which the other women—the Elsie and the Cissys—seemed to him deficient. Here is my subject, he said, and when he had set up his easel, he spread the rug for her in a shady place. But for the present she preferred to stand behind him, her parasol slanted slightly, talking, he thought very well, of the art of the great men who had made Barbizon rememberable. He was sorry when she said the sun was getting too hot for her, and she went and lay on the rug he had spread for her in the shade of the oak. She had brought a book to read, but she only read a line here and there. Her thoughts wandered from the page to the man sitting easily on his camp-stool, his long legs wide apart. His small head, his big hat, the line of his bent back, amused and interested her; she liked his abrupt speech, and wondered if she could love him. A couple of peasant women came by, bent under the weight of the faggots they had picked, and Etta could see that Morton was watching the movements of these women, and she thought how well they would come into the picture he was painting. Soon after he rose from his easel and walked towards her. Have you finished? she asked.

No, not quite, but the light has changed. I cannot go on any more to-day. One can't work in the sunlight above an hour.

You've been working longer than that.

But haven't touched the effect. I've been painting in some figures, two peasant women picking sticks. Come and look.

X

Morton had finished his picture, and now lunch was over and they lay on the rug under the oak tree talking eagerly. Corot never married, Morton remarked. He

doesn't seem to have ever cared for any woman. They say he never had a mistress.

I hear that you have not followed his example.

Not more than I could help.

His candour amused her so that she laughed outright; and she watched the stolid, childish stare that she liked, until a longing to take him in her arms and kiss him came upon her, and she asked him if he had ever been in love.

Yes, I think I was.

How long did it last?

About five years.

And then?

A lot of rot about scruples of conscience. I said: I give you a week to think it over, and if I don't hear from you in that time I'm off to Italy.

Did she write?

Not until I had left Paris. Then she spent five-and-twenty pounds in telegrams trying to get me back.

But you wouldn't go back?

Not I; with me, when an affair of that sort is over, it is really over. Don't you think I'm right?

Perhaps so. . . . But I'm afraid we've learnt love in different schools.

Then the sooner you relearn it in my school the better.

At that moment a light breeze came up the sandy path, carrying some dust on to the picture. Morton stamped and swore. For three minutes it was: Damn! damn! damn! Do you always swear like that in the presence of ladies? she asked. Well, what's a fellow to do when a blasted wind comes up smothering his picture in sand?

Etta could only laugh at him, and while he packed up his canvases, paint-box and easel, she thought that she understood him, and fancied that she would be able to manage him. And convinced of her power she said aloud, as they plunged into the forest: I always think

it is a pity that it is considered vulgar to walk arm-in-arm. I like to take an arm. I suppose we can do what we like in the forest of Fontainebleau. But you're too heavily laden——

No, not a bit. I should like it.

She took his arm with a caressing movement and walked by his side, and they talked until they reached the motive of his second picture.

What I've got on the canvas isn't very much like the view in front of you, is it?

No, not much. I don't like it as well as the other picture.

I began it late one evening. I've never been able to get the same effect again. Now it looks like a Puvis de Chavannes—not my picture, but that hillside, that large space of blue sky and the woodmen.

It does a little. Are you going on with it?

Why?

Because there is no shade for me to sit in. I shall be roasted if we remain here.

What shall we do? Lie down in some shady place?

We might do that. . . . I know what I should like.

What?

A long drive in the forest.

We can do that. We shall meet somebody going to Barbizon and we'll ask them to send us a fly.

And they wandered on through a pine wood where the heat was stifling, the dry trees like firewood, scorched and ready to break into flame; their feet dragged through the loose sand till they came to a place where the trees had all been felled, and a green undergrowth of pines, two or three feet high, had sprung up. It was difficult to force their way through; the prickly branches were disagreeable to touch, and underneath the ground was spongy with layers of fallen

needles hardly covered with coarse grass. Morton missed the way, and his paint-box and canvases had begun to weigh heavily when they came upon the road they were seeking. But where they came upon it there was only a little burnt grass, and Morton proposed that they should toil on until they came to a pleasanter place. The road ascended along the verge of a steep hill, at the top of which they met a bicyclist, who promised to deliver Morton's note. It was pleasant to rest—they were tired, and it was pleasant to listen, for the forest murmured like a shell. But absorbed though they were by this vast Nature, each was thinking intensely of the other. Etta knew she was near the moment when Morton would take her hand and tell her that he loved her. She wondered what he would say. She did not think he would say he loved her; he would say: You're a damned pretty woman. She could see he was thinking of something, and suspected him of thinking out a phrase or an oath appropriate to the occasion. And she was nearly right. Morton was thinking how he should act. Etta was not the common Barbizon art student whose one idea is to become the mistress of a painter so that she may learn to paint. She had encouraged him, but she had kept her little dignity. Moreover, he did not feel sure of her. So the minutes went by in awkward expectancy, and Morton had not kissed her before the carriage arrived. But the kiss would come; she was sure of that, and lay back in the fly smiling, Morton thought, superciliously. It seemed to him stupid to put his arm round her waist and try to kiss her. But, sooner or later, he would have to do this. Once this Rubicon was past, he would know where he was. As he debated, the trunks rose branchless for thirty or forty feet, and he asked her if the tall, thin, almost branchless beeches were not like lances bent in the shock of the encounter.

The forest now extended like a great temple, hushed in the ritual of the sunset. The light that suffused the green leaves overhead glossed the brown leaves underfoot, marking the smooth ground as with a pattern. Like chapels every dell seemed in the tranquil light, and Etta's eyes wandered from the colonnades to the underwoods, and were raised to the scraps of blue that appeared through the thick leafage, till she longed for a break in the trees, a vista, and at the end of it a plain or a pine-plumed hill-top. We are nearly there now, Morton said; and leaving the carriage, which was to wait for them, Etta followed him through rocks and furze bushes, taking his arm, and once accidentally, or nearly accidentally, she sprang from a rock into his arms. She was surprised that he did not take advantage of the occasion to kiss her. Standing on this flat rock we're like figures in a landscape by Wilson, she said. So we are, replied Morton, who was struck by the truth of the comparison. But there is too much colour in the scene for Wilson—he would have reduced it all to a beautiful blue, with only a yellow flush to tell where the sun had gone.

It would be very nice if you would make me a sketch of the lake. I'll lend you a lead pencil; the back of an envelope will do.

I've a water-colour box in my pocket and a block. Sit down there and I'll do you a sketch.

And while you are accomplishing a work of genius, I'll supply the levity; and don't you think I'm just the sort of person to supply the necessary leaven of lightness? Look at my frock and my sunshade. Morton laughed, and she continued: What did you think of me the first time you saw me? What impression did I produce on you?

Do you want me to tell you, to tell you exactly?

Yes, indeed I do.

I don't think I can.

What was it? Etta asked in a low, murmuring tone, and when she leaned towards him the movement was intimate, affectionate and false.

Well—you struck me as being a little dowdy.

Dowdy! I had a nice new frock on. I don't think I could have looked dowdy, and among the dreadful old rags that the girls wear here.

It had nothing to do with the clothes you wore. It is the quiet, sedate air that you wear sometimes.

I wasn't in good spirits when I came down here.

No, you weren't. I thought you might be a bore.

But I haven't been that, have I?

No, I'm damned if you're that.

But what a charming sketch you're making. You take that ordinary common grey from the palette, and it becomes beautiful. If I were to take the very same tint and put it on the paper, it would be mud. Morton placed his sketch against a rock and surveyed it from a little distance, saying: I don't call it bad, do you? I think I've got the sensation of the lonely lake. But the effect changes so rapidly. Those clouds are quite different from what they were just now. I never saw a finer sky; it is wonderful; it is splendid as a battle.

Write underneath it: That night the sky was like a battle.

No; it would do for my sketch.

You think the suggestion would overpower the reality? But it is a charming sketch and will remind me of a charming day, of a very happy day. She raised her eyes. The moment had come. He threw one arm round her, and raised her face with the other hand. She gave her lips easily, and during the drive home she lay upon his shoulder, allowing his arm to lie round her.

Elsie said you'd get round me.

What did she mean?

Well, said Etta, nestling a little closer and laughing low, haven't you got round me? Her playfulness enchanted her lover, but her tenderness in speaking of Ralph quickened his jealousy.

My violets lay under his hand; he must have died thinking of me.

But the woman who wrote to you, his mistress, she must have known all about his love for you. What did she say?

She said very little. She was very nice to me. She could see that I was a good woman.

But that made no difference so far as she was concerned. You took her lover away from her.

She knew that I hadn't done anything wrong, that we were merely friends. The conversation paused a moment, then Morton said: It seems to have been a mysterious kind of death. What did he die of?

Ah, no one ever knew. The doctors could make nothing of his case. He had been complaining a long time. They spoke of overwork, but——

But what?

I believe he died of slow poisoning.

Slow poisoning! Who could have poisoned him?

Ellen Gibbs.

What an awful thing to say. . . . I suppose you have some reason for suspecting her?

His death was very mysterious. The doctors could not account for it. There ought to have been a post-mortem examination. In the silence that fell upon this avowal Etta remembered that Ralph had held socialistic theories and was a member of a sect of socialists, and she continued: Ralph was a member of a secret society. . . . He was an anarchist—no one suspected it; but he told me

everything, and it was I who persuaded him to leave the Brotherhood.

I do not see what that has to do with his death by slow poisoning.

Those who retire from these societies usually die.

But why Ellen Gibbs?

She was a member of the same society; it was she who got him to join. When he resigned, it was her duty to——

Kill him! What a terrible story. I wonder if you're right.

I know I'm right. At the end of the pause Morton said: I wonder if you like me as much as you liked Ralph.

It is quite different. He was very good to me.

And do you think that I shall not be good to you?

Yes, I think you will, she said, looking up and taking the hand which pressed against her waist.

You say he was a very clever artist. Do you like his work better than mine?

It was as different as you yourselves are.

I wonder if I should like it.

He would have liked that; and she pointed with her parasol towards an oak glade, golden-hearted and hushed.

A sort of Diaz, then?

No, not in the least like that. No; his wasn't the Rousseau palette.

How the motive could be treated except as Rousseau or Diaz would have treated it, I cannot imagine. And it does not matter. What matters now is that I can kiss you. If you loved me you would not kiss me dryly.

I don't know how to kiss otherwise. This is the first time we have been out together. I have never been out so late with a man before. It is almost night under

these trees. You cannot love me. The other day you saw me for the first time.

But I am going to love you. Let me kiss you; there is no other way.

I'd like a man to love me before I kiss him.

Then you will never be loved, for it is through the lips that love steals into the blood, and you keep them closed.

But can I complete the conquest with my lips?

Not with the lips alone.

And for how long shall I have to wait for your love, sir?

It is a poor compliment to a woman to love her at first sight, or at second or third. In six months a man's love is at height. Is it not the same with you?

I know nothing of love, but I can see that you have made love a great deal.

How can you tell that?

Etta did not answer, and Morton, fearing his question to be a stupid one, began to struggle with her. I will kiss you, Morton, but you must take your hand from my knee. I do not like to be kissed like that and will not go out driving with you again. I see that I cannot trust you. Morton pleaded, but it was a long time before he could woo her out of a silence that seemed to him sullen. At last she said, as if she had come to a sudden resolve: No, I will not do what you ask me. But I'll marry you?

Let it be so, then. But marriage is far away. You will have to go to England, and——

If you loved me you could wait a little. We have known each other only a few days. In a month I may be a different woman in your eyes. I beg of you to desist, else I shall not be able to keep my promise to you. A month, two, three, is not long to wait and during that time respect your betrothed. You will not regret the

waiting. Love has come to you in the past too easily. A change is good for us all.

XI

Every day a carriage came from Melun or Fontainebleau, and Morton and Etta drove away from Lunions through Barbizon, to the general admiration of the village, returning at evening with recommendations of the inns they had visited and the routes they had passed through, everybody thinking how much more interesting a narrative would be of what they said and did rather than what their eyes saw. In the forest, among its rocks and glades, when the painters visited each other's easels, Etta as a protagonist of unamiable virtue was much discussed, different views being held regarding Morton's chances of success, some holding that Etta held him fawning in a leash of hope, whilst others, speaking out of the pride of sex, shook their heads, saying that such a leash could not hold a man from his art; only the leash of the flesh could do that, they averred, without, however, much conviction.

In September Elsie and Cissy were painting on a steep hillside overlooking the high road, Elsie's subject almost a sinister one; rocks with great clefts, a den a passer-by might think it to be of some wild animal, wolf or boar. And feeling that it would not be wise to touch again the overhanging branches, having gotten as much effect as her means allowed, and not certain whether she could persuade Cissy to come up the hillside to criticise the lair on the easel, Elsie descended the hillside with the picture in her hand and set it before Cissy. Cissy liked it, but did not think that rocks made so interesting a subject as three yellowing birch trees bending across a lustral autumn sky. It is strange, Elsie said, how people always disagree about pictures. Etta thought mine the

better subject, and the only fault she found was that I hadn't introduced a wild boar. My rocks, she said, were suitable for a sow to have her litter among. Sow isn't the word she used; what did she say? Une laie! She liked your rocks, Elsie, so that she might bring that word into her talk. No doubt she had just learnt it from the Comte de Malmédy. What a copycat she is; none was ever slyer. How she has turned Morton to her purpose. It was he who introduced her to the Comte. And the girls began to talk about the beautiful Renaissance house that Henri quatre had built for la belle Gabrielle. Who was la belle Gabrielle? Cissy asked, and Elsie answered that she thought la belle Gabrielle was the mistress of Henry the fourth—she was sure her lover was one of the Henrys. Cissy asked if the King had wearied of her and put her in prison, or if he had ordered her head to be struck off, as Henry the eighth treated his wives on more than one occasion. Elsie could not call to mind that any great disaster had befallen to la belle Gabrielle, for whom Henry the fourth had built a palace in view of the Seine, a palace now held on lease from the State by the Comte, who, they heard at Lunions that night, had been appointed to the Governorship of Algeria, an appointment that might oblige him to ask the State to relieve him of the lease, for, although he was a rich man, it was hardly possible that he could bear the expense of the Government House in Algiers and a palace at Fontainebleau. It was not thought, however, that the State would relieve him of his lease, and in that case the Comte might decline to accept the appointment, great an honour as it was, for few men care to ruin themselves for a vanity, though the vanity be a beautiful one, as the house in view of the Seine was certainly.

The words: in view of the Seine, called forth the

story of the great injustice that had been committed by the railway company, who had built an embankment thirty feet high (over which twenty or twenty-five trains passed daily) between the house and the river. The only concession the railway company had made was the building of a bridge, an archway through which the Comte could find his way to his yacht. He had offered the company five hundred thousand francs to bore a tunnel under the hill, but they would not accept this offer, and the Comte had gone to law; and the Court had only allowed him sixty thousand francs for damages done to his grounds. That is how things are managed in France! somebody said, and the remark provoked an answer: that it was by disregarding the aesthetic value of gardens and points of view that France possessed the advantage of cheap railways. In England railway companies had had to pay ten times the value of the grounds they appropriated, and that was why the cost of living was higher in England than in France, despite the advantages of free trade. Whereupon a tedious discussion began, free trade versus tariffs, which set Cissy and Elsie whispering together. If the Comtesse cannot accompany her husband to Algiers, Elsie said, I am afraid Etta will be cut out of her visit. You think, asked Cissy, that she was not lying when she told us that the Comtesse had invited her to the Government House at Algiers? She would hardly dare to tell us that if it were not true, Elsie answered. Besides, there's nothing unlikely in it. She is now one of the house party. And maybe Morton will be asked too. I wonder, said Cissy, looking up, for the talk showed signs of returning from economics to the Comte and his household. But somebody intervened with a new argument in favour of tariffs, and the girls listened wearily till it was mooted that the Comte de Malmédy might let

the palace. But to whom? France could not supply a tenant, that was certain, and it was difficult to suppose that an Englishman or an American would pay a large rent for a house, a historic monument, that would have to be preserved intact by the tenant, no additions or alterations being allowed.

It was said, and with truth, that it was difficult to find in these modern times anybody rich enough to live in a palace; only a few soap boilers and sugar refiners could afford palaces, and to live in *la maison de la belle Gabrielle* under three hundred thousand francs a year was impossible. The Comte spent at least five hundred thousand; his expenditure could not be less, so it was related. The hunting cost him a great deal, and the scale upon which he lived was almost princely—retinues of servants, huntsmen, coachmen, grooms, kennel folk of all kinds and sorts. Five hundred thousand francs, it was said, would not clear the Comte, who was spending at least a million francs a year at Fontainebleau, and as Governor of Algeria the pittance he would receive from the Government would not make up the deficit. His expenses at Fontainebleau would have to be reduced, and maybe the hunt that would encircle Barbizon on the morrow would be the last. On hearing that the hounds would be laid on the slot of a boar and not a deer, Elsie and Cissy hoped the boar would not choose their hillside for a line of retreat. We have no wish to be ripped up by tusks, the girls said, and they thought of remaining at home, but were assured that a hunted boar had other things to think of than to attack stray painters. And so in their courage they went forth on the morrow to their hillside to put the finishing hand to their rocks and birches, and it was whilst engaged in cleaning up some odd corners that their attention was drawn from their work by the sound of wheels, and going to an opening in

the trees they spied a carriage. Madame de Malmédy's carriage, Elsie whispered. Etta and Morton are in it. Morton sits opposite and settles the rugs across the ladies' knees. I wonder what the meaning of all this is, said Cissy, Morton selling his pictures to the Comte, and Etta becoming the Comtesse's friend. Suspicious, isn't it? She has dined with them once, Elsie. Where Etta dines once, she dines again. One dinner doesn't make a mistress, Elsie replied. The girls hearkened to the horns in the forest. The carriage moved on, and all the afternoon they gave occasional ear to the hunting, sometimes hearing it from afar, sometimes the chase passing close by. Once three huntsmen came crashing through the brushwood, wound the long horns they wore about their shoulders, and dashed on again. Once a strayed hound came very near, so near that Elsie threw the dog a piece of bread; but he did not see it, and trotted away in search of the pack. I think that hound must have followed a deer by himself until he lost him, said Elsie. I hear it's very hard to keep hounds on the scent of a boar; they don't like it. It's almost as disagreeable to them as the scent of an otter, which they cannot abide; whereas we like the smell. Wherever did you learn all that from, Elsie? Were you ever in love with a huntsman. The girls screamed. Did you see the boar, Elsie? Elsie didn't think that anything like a boar had come into the wood, but Cissy was sure she was not mistaken. The boar must have turned at the bottom of the hill, she said, and gathering up their paint-boxes, brushes, and pictures, the girls started to walk back to Barbizon, to be overtaken when about half-way by Morton and Etta, who bade Madame de Malmédy good-bye and walked home with them, telling that the quarry had been taken close to the central carrefour; but the huntsmen did not come up in time,

and several hounds were disabled before Comte Gaston de Malmédy managed to give the *coup de grâce*. Whereupon the eatable value of boar's head was discussed till Etta mentioned that the Comtesse was going to give a ball. Going to give a ball! cried Cissy and Elsie, and if the words: Shall we be asked? were not on their lips, they were plainly written in the girls' eyes, sending a smile curling round Etta's thin lips. Etta is a little beast, who would like to have the whole ball to herself, Cissy said to Elsie as soon as Etta was out of hearing, a judgment that was unjust, for when the Comte and Comtesse came to Barbizon to lunch at Lunions (the horses, the carriage, the liveries, the dresses, and the great title making a fine stir in the village), Etta introduced Elsie and Cissy to the Comtesse, saying that the Comte must see Elsie's rocks and Cissy's birch trees. She isn't such a bad sort after all, said Cissy afterwards. Her triumph wouldn't be complete if we didn't attend the ball, Elsie answered. Etta must have an audience always. She'll get her dress from Paris, and a fine sum her brother Harold will have to pay for it. She is determined to outshine us. What shall we look like in our poor little frocks?

Why always try to see the black side of everything, Elsie? She will get her pleasure out of the ball, and we will get ours. Live and let live, that's my maxim.

But did you see that Etta paid very little attention to Morton? She never left the Comte's side.

Yes; I noticed that she seemed a good deal occupied with the Comte. But after all, she is the Comte's guest. The Comte is the great man and she must do him homage.

And did you notice how poorly the Comtesse looked? It is said that she is in the very worst health and is not expected to live very long.

Oh, Elsie, you don't mean to say that Etta is already thinking of dropping Morton in the hope of stepping into the Comtesse's shoes later on? That really would be too far-fetched!

Far-fetched it may be, but Etta is always far-fetched. I can't make her out. She is always talking about her virtue; but I hardly think that Morton would be as devoted to her as he is if he weren't her lover. She tells a lot of lies—of that I'm certain.

Elsie's face changed expression suddenly, becoming so grave that Cissy knew she was thinking of what she should wear at the ball; and Cissy's thoughts taking flight from Etta, settled upon pale blue for herself. She looked well in blue; but she had worn the colour so often that it seemed to her she would do well to try her luck in pink on so historic an occasion as a ball given by the Comte and Comtesse de Malmédy in the palace that Henri quatre had built for la belle Gabrielle.

XII

The hairdresser had come from Fontainebleau, and while he tested his tongs, which were not yet hot enough, Elsie said: I think Morton is beginning to regret that he introduced her to the Malmédys, and it wouldn't surprise me if he were beginning to feel that it's as likely as not she will throw him over for one of the grand people she is now living with. If Mademoiselle is now ready, said the hairdresser. Cissy abandoned her hair to his hands and irons, and Elsie continued to dress and undress. I asked him, Elsie said, for some dances, but he told me that he never engaged himself beforehand. Perhaps she has thrown him over and will not dance with him. Or it may be, Cissy replied, that Morton has not engaged himself for dances because he wished to see if she would keep any for him.

Cissy's was the better guess, it being Morton's plan not to engage himself for any dances so that he might watch Etta. Clever as she is, he said to himself as he walked up the staircase to the ballroom, she'll not be able to hide from me the number of dances she has with the Comte and the number she sits out with him. And having shaken hands with his hostess, he sought a corner; and what he saw from his corner was all his heart's desire—a brown, merry face and soft, fluffy hair. An Etta, he said, in white tulle laid upon white silk, in a bodice of silver fish scale, shimmering like a moonbeam when she lays her hand upon her partner's shoulder, moving forward with a motion that permeates her whole body. . . . A silver shoe appeared, and Morton thought: What a vanity! Only a vanity, but what a delicious and beautiful vanity! The waltz ended, some dancers passed out of the ballroom, and Etta was surrounded. It looked as if her card would be filled before Morton could get near her. But she stood on tiptoe and, looking over the surrounding shoulders, cried that she would keep the fourteenth for him. Why did you not come before? she asked smiling, and went out of the room on the arm of a young man. At that moment Comte Gaston de Malmédy took Morton's arm and asked when the picture he had ordered would be finished. Morton hoped by the end of next week, and the men walked through the room talking of pictures. On the way back they met Etta, who told Morton she had promised the Comte the next dance, and that he must now go and talk to Madame de Malmédy.

Madame de Malmédy sat in a high chair within the doorway, out of reach of any draught that might happen on the staircase, her blonde hair drawn up and elaborately curled, her head-dress recalling a cameo or an old coin. She spoke in a high, clear voice, and Morton began to wonder on what terms she lived with her husband; and

to find out, he spoke of Etta as the prettiest woman in the room. Madame de Malmédy did not contest the point, but said: *Les deux belles Anglaises*, when Cissy and Elsie came whirling by, Cissy white, large and bare, Elsie small and brown. Morton regretted that he would have to ask them to dance, but he could not do else; and when he had danced with them, and the three young ladies to whom Madame de Malmédy introduced him, and had taken a Comtesse into supper, he found that the fourteenth waltz was over. But Etta bade him not to look so depressed—she had kept the cotillion for him. It was going to begin very soon; he had better look for chairs. He did as he was told, tying his handkerchief round a couple, and the cotillion proved as unsatisfactory as he expected it would. Etta was always dancing, but rarely with him. Dancers retired from the dancing-room, to return in masks and dominoes; a paper imitation of a sixteenth-century house was brought in, ladies showed themselves at the lattice and were serenaded; and when at the end of his inventions the leader fell back on the hand-glass and the cushion, Etta refused dance after dance. At last the leader called to Morton, who came up certain of triumph; but Etta passed the handkerchief over the glass and drew the cushion from his knee. She danced both figures with the Comte de Malmédy, and was covered with flowers and ribbons at the end of the cotillion; and though a little woman, she looked very handsome in a triumph that Morton hated. But he hid his jealousy as he would his hand in a game of cards, and when the last guests were going, he bade her good-night with a calm face. Madame de Malmédy had gone to her room; she had felt so tired that she could sit up no longer, and had begged her husband to excuse her. And as Etta went upstairs, three or four steps in front of the Comte, Morton saw her so clearly that the

thought struck him that he had never seen her before. She appeared in that instant as a toy, a trivial toy made of coloured glass, and he wondered why he had been attracted by this bit of coloured glass.

He laughed at his folly and went home, certain that he could lose her without pain, but visions of Etta and the Comte haunted his pillow. He did not know whether he slept or waked, and rose from his bed to meet her on the terrace at Fontainebleau. But why at Fontainebleau? he asked. Her visit to the Malmédys having come to an end, why did she not return to Barbizon? And why had she given him a tryst on the terrace by the fish ponds? Was she lodging at Fontainebleau because meetings with the Comte would be easier there than at Barbizon? Was that it? And on his way to the fish ponds he considered the questions with which he would trap her. But these were forgotten as soon as he saw her coming towards him along the pathway, and talking to her he became so happy that he feared to imperil his happiness by reproaches. He was glad to speak instead of the fabled carp in whose noses rings had been put in the time of Louis the fifteenth. The statues on their pedestals, high up in the clear, bright air, were singularly beautiful, and he tried to speak of the red castle, and the display of terraces reaching to the edge of the withering forest.

Morton, dear, don't be angry with me for not having asked you to dance as often as I should have done. I had to dance with the Comte, for I was his guest, but he means nothing to me.

But why have you left Barbizon? Why are you here?

Lunions is not a place for any woman who values her reputation.

If you cared for me, you would think very little——

Of my reputation? All the same, you would be sorry

afterwards if I gave myself to you at Lunions in an inn full of cocottes.

Have you come here to give yourself to me?

What, in the Hotel de France? And friends are calling to see me all the afternoon! And servants coming upstairs! One has to undress.

It doesn't take long to undress. Besides, it isn't necessary. And then, feeling that he had said something foolish, he tried to laugh it off. If you really loved me, you wouldn't think of cocottes or the trouble of undressing.

Perhaps one of these days.

When will that day come? Is it near or far? he asked hastily.

I won't promise, she answered, swinging her parasol in a way that seemed to him characteristic of her, for when I promise, I like to keep my promise. You ask too much. You don't realise what it means to a woman to give herself. Have you never had a scruple about anything?

Scruple about anything! I don't know what you mean. What scruple can you have? You're not a religious woman.

It isn't religion at all, it is—well, something. . . . I don't know.

This has gone on too long. If I don't get you now I shall lose you. You are a bundle of falsehoods, Etta. All you see and hear and think is false. You said you'd marry me, but you didn't mean it. You said it to gain time, that was all. Whereas I have always been truthful, never pretending to you that I was something I was not.

You have been true to yourself, Morton.

Which means, he cried, that I have been true to my base sensual nature. I asked you to be my mistress, and then, at your suggestion, I asked you to be my wife. I don't see what more I can do. You say you're very fond

of me, and yet you want to be neither mistress nor wife. Are you going to marry me, or are you not. When?

Don't ask me. I cannot say when. Besides, you don't want to marry me. If I am as false as you say—your falsehood being my truth, and vice versa—you cannot want to marry me. Think what the marriage would be of such an ill-assorted couple.

You would save me from myself? he sneered. Of all the characters in comedy, the altruist suits you the least.

She did not answer, and he began to wonder if she hated him. At the end of the pause he asked her if she had taken rooms at the Hotel de France, and learnt that she had, but was returning to Barbizon. But why return to Barbizon if you have taken rooms at the Hotel de France? he enquired. She was going to say good-bye to Cissy and Elsie. And returning to Fontainebleau tonight? he asked. She was not sure; and what happened was that she retained her rooms at Lunions, and drove back and forth, sleeping sometimes in the village, sometimes in the town, perplexing Morton, who sought vainly a reason for her simultaneous patronage of the hotel and the inn. Letters come here for her, he said, and letters come to the Hotel de France for her. There must be a reason. There always is one. No, Morton, there needn't be a reason, Elsie answered, but there is a cause always. Perhaps, Morton replied; a cause that may elude us, an undiscoverable cause. Has she come to hate me, Cissy? She can't hate, Morton, for she can't love. I wouldn't go so far as to say that, Cissy, said Elsie. She may strike only on one box. I'm sure she hates Davau, for he saw through her. I think she must be a little mad, answered Cissy; her mother was, of a certainty, if half the stories about her are true.

A few days later Etta appeared nervously calm, her

face set in a definite and gathering expression of resolution. Elsie could see that something serious had happened, but Etta, while admitting that something had happened, declined to go into particulars. Morton had behaved badly, so much she would admit, and after a little pressing she confessed that his behaviour was the cause of her departure. She must leave before he came down; and as if unable to bear the delay any longer, she asked Cissy and Elsie to walk a little way with her. I cannot stay after what happened last night. Oh, dear! she exclaimed, my hat nearly went that time. I'm afraid I shall have a rough drive. You will indeed, said Elsie; you'd better stay. I cannot; it would be impossible for me to see him again. We can't talk in this wind, screamed Cissy, we'd better go back. At that moment a young pine crashed across the road not very far from where they were standing, and the girls looked round for shelter. Those rocks! cried Cissy. We shan't get there in time; the trees will fall upon us, answered Elsie. There's not a minute to lose, said Etta; come! As they ran the earth gave forth a rumbling sound and was lifted beneath their feet. It seemed as if subterranean had joined with aerial forces, for the rumbling sound increased. The roots of the trees are giving way! cried Etta, and as she spoke the pines bent, wavered, and were strewn. It was hard to escape the falling trees, but they reached the rocks and found a safe shelter in an almost cave, where they lay hearkening to the storm. Now it seemed to have taken the forest in violent and passionate grasp, like a giant, determined to destroy it utterly. Sometimes the wind was far away, and as it approached they could hear it trumpeting, careering, springing forward; it paused, rushed, leaped, paused again, and the girls crept closer to each other, not daring to leave the cave, afraid lest the storm should return unexpectedly

and overtake them in the avenue, now nearly impassable. You'll not be able to go to Fontainebleau to-day, said Elsie. Then I'll go to Melun, Etta answered, and meeting a carriage on their way thither, Etta jumped in, leaving Cissy saying: If it hadn't been for the storm she would have told us what happened last night. I'm not certain that anything happened, Elsie answered; she just wished us to believe that Morton forced his way into her bedroom. And you don't believe he did? asked Cissy. My experiences do not help me to understand her, nor do yours, Cissy.

XIII

The next news of Etta was that she had gone to Algiers with the Comte, and the Comtesse, of course, who, contrary to all expectations, had decided to accompany her husband, bringing her children with her. Gabrielle's house would therefore be deserted till the early summer, till June. The Comte would be there in July and August, and where the Comte was Etta would be. Such was the news, and Morton, who had returned to Fontainebleau from Paris, fell to thinking of Brittany, where he would find subjects more consonant with his talent than Fontainebleau forest, which Diaz and Rousseau had made somewhat trite and commonplace. Millet, too, had familiarised the public with long plains and shepherdesses following sheep. Jacques had painted sheep by day and night so often that one couldn't think of a sheep-fold except in Jacques's terms. But if he (Morton) were to spend his summer in Brittany, he would never see Etta again. And at the thought of never seeing her again he rose to his feet and walked up and down the studio, uncertain if he could go on living without seeing her. She would make the Comte miserable, unhappy, as she had made him; but he

would prefer to be unhappy with her than happy with any other woman. Life in this lonely studio, mending landscapes, is terrible. I will begin a figure, he said, and went out in search of a model and found one, a happy, rosy-cheeked little servant, out of a place, who was glad to sit to him, and whom he made almost as unhappy as himself, for she very soon guessed that he was in love with another woman. But despite the help of his little model, Morton found the forgetting of Etta to be a long and bitter business; sometimes he thought it was all over, that he was free from her, but he knew he was not, and that if she held up her little finger he would go back to her. To be made unhappy, he said. Even so, I should go back to her. And when June came round and he prepared for his summer outing, the thought of seeing her again still held him in an unrelaxing grip; and to see her he must go to Barbizon, however much he might hate to see the old, ill-paven street, the inn garden, and the inn parlour covered with pictures. I can never paint there again, he said to himself; painting is happiness, and there's no happiness for me in Barbizon. Wherever we have been unhappy is a dead place to us. And his thoughts turning to last year's motives, he continued: My spirit dries up at the very thought of them! But there's much else in the forest of Fontainebleau. And if she doesn't appear in June, she will not return, and I'll go to Brittany, where everything will be new, the earth, the skies, and the people. If I had the courage to start to-morrow for Brittany!

But he had not that courage and returned to Barbizon to wait for her, certain of pain and unhappiness, sorry for his pictures and sorry for himself, but unable to do otherwise than wait for news of Etta. Cissy and Elsie will bring me news of her, he said. But for Elsie and Cissy he had to wait several weeks, and his life seemed

to burn up like autumn weeds when they told him she had not written to them during the winter. If she returns, it will be in another month, he said to himself, and regretting that he had left Paris, or thinking he did, he cursed the forest, saying that it kept alive his memory of her, till one morning Cissy came round to his studio with a letter that she had just received from Etta, who told that she was back in London, or rather in Sutton, and was coming to Fontainebleau a little later. Coming after the Malmédys, I suppose, said Morton, and looking through Cissy he saw Etta in his thought. She may be coming back to paint, Cissy answered, but Morton did not think that she would ever take up painting again. You see, she doesn't speak of returning to Barbizon, but to Fontainebleau, to be nearer the Malmédys. She hasn't forgotten you, Morton; if you read on, you'll see. Morton read on; he swore and called her names, but he was pleased that he was not forgotten.

A few days later Etta wrote to Elsie; her letter contained a cutting from a newspaper in which he was spoken of favourably, and at this expression of goodwill, Morton's resolution to stand aloof broke down, and he began to think of the letter he might write without letting her see that all she had to do was to hold up her little finger to bring her lover back to her. I thought, he wrote, that after this journey to Algeria there would be a turning out of pockets. She won't like that, he said, and chuckled over his sarcasm as he went to his subject in the forest. It was not long, however, before he began to regret his sarcasm, for Etta did not answer his letter, and he attributed her silence to his words. He was wrong again; Etta's answer, when it came, contained no reference to the turning out of pockets, and he said: A sense of humour in a woman is a great help to a lost admirer. The words caused him a pang and then a

sinking of the heart. A lost admirer! I couldn't have expressed myself better. And then hope began to revive. She is coming back, and why should she write to me unless—— He did not dare to finish the sentence; and a week later a note came saying that she was driving over from Fontainebleau and would call at his studio in the afternoon about three o'clock.

On opening the door, it seemed to him that he was receiving somebody out of a picture, so beautifully was Etta dressed; a terra-cotta silk was unusual and certainly incongruous in Barbizon, and in his rough way Morton expressed his surprise: You look as if you were just about to step into one of Watteau's ships bound for Cythera. Etta laughed, saying that Watteau's ships never reached Cythera, doing no more than to sail round its coasts, a remark that so thoroughly roused all Morton's old animosities, that Etta spoke of Courbet, Corot, Daubigny, Diaz and Rousseau, without being able to engage him in conversation, it seeming to Morton that all her questions were designed to make fun of him. Or is all this talk about Courbet and Corot merely a beating to windward? he asked himself, his gloom increasing every moment. And perceiving that she was annoying him, Etta said: Well, tell me with whom you have been in love. I met somebody who tried to undo the mischief you did me, he answered, and she encouraged him to talk about this new love of his, an encouragement that he appreciated, for it relieved him of his love of her to tell her of the benefit that this new love had been to him; and to move her to repentance, he related that at one time he was very near to suicide. And you, he said when he came to the end of his story, what have you been doing all this while? Tell me about the Comte. Did he make love to you? We saw a great deal of each other, she answered, and as for making love, it all

depends upon the man and the woman. Love differs with every one of us, she continued, and he asked her if she had found the Comte's love superior to his in practice and theory. She turned her brown eyes upon him and said, he thought somewhat sententiously, that he and the Comte were very different. You were true to yourself, she added.

And you to yourself! he rapped out. I am always that, she replied, her thoughtful and decisive voice exasperating Morton, who asked her bluntly whether the Comte was her lover, a question that brought a look of pleasure into her face.

You may just as well tell me the truth, Etta; it would be a relief to know that there was some trace, some spark of humanity in you.

No, he was not my lover in the sense that you mean, and I don't think I could give myself to a man with any conviction unless I was going to have a child by him.

I fear that we are as antagonistic as ever.

It may be, but as long as we are not untruthful to each other——

Oh, damn truth! Tell me about the Comte, and if you are going to marry him. His wife is ill, very ill, and a permanent recovery is not likely.

I would not wish anything to happen to Marie, but if anything should happen—well, there's no saying.

I should like to see you settled, Etta, Morton said paternally, whereupon Etta became discursive, and rattled off a story. The Comte's attentions to her in Algiers had caused much jealousy in the Government House, the other women not liking to see her put next to the Comte at dinner. She was invariably placed next to him. And thought catching fire from thought, she began to speak of the Comtesse's friendships,

telling that one day, on overlooking the invitations sent out, the Comte noticed a certain name, and sending for his orderly, he walked to and fro, asking himself how it was that the name appeared on the list in spite of his having given strict orders that it should be omitted.

My orders to you were that Mr. Villars was not to receive invitations to the Government House, but despite my orders I see his name among my guests. What explanation have you to offer?

That I am not answerable for the inclusion of Mr. Villars's name at dinner, sir. Mr. Villars received his invitation from the Comtesse.

The Comtesse did not know of my interdiction.

Pardon me, sir, but I mentioned your interdiction to the Comtesse.

Gaston turned aside speechless, Etta said, and I heard afterwards——

But, Etta, the Comtesse's lying-in was announced in the newspapers.

That third child was not his, as is well known. The Comte's health precludes the possibility; and she spoke of a disease of the spine which obliged the Comte to wear iron supports. A sort of stays, Morton interjected. Etta answered: Yes, without perceiving the sarcasm, so deep was she in her own concerns. She broke the pause suddenly to tell of a journey that she and the Comte, and others, of course, had made, going as far into the desert as Biskra. You will be surprised to hear, she said, that I have returned to art.

I am not in the least surprised.

Not to painting, but to drawing.

Better still. Show me your drawings. Etta opened her sketch-book; it had been in her lap all the while, but Morton had not noticed it. Before I show you any, she said, I would like to say that I look upon my

scribbles as material for half a dozen drawings or more—— For a book you have written? interjected Morton. Yes, she answered, how quick you are. I have written some articles, and while writing and thinking of them I made a few drawings, and I think it would be unkind to separate the drawings from the text and the text from the drawings. But drawings done for reproduction require a little revision, Morton said. Yes, she replied; and I thought that I might look to you for revision and advice.

Tea was brought in, and during the drinking of it, Etta's drawings were announced by Morton to be very clever; and after tea, till the bell sounded for dinner, Morton listened to Etta reading her narrative of her travels in the land in which summer is always.

XIV

For the next few weeks Etta seemed to spend her time driving with a clergyman through the forest of Fontainebleau, visiting its various towns and villages, arriving at Barbizon nearly every day for luncheon or for afternoon tea—arriving in a carriage drawn not by one but by two horses, driven by a coachman in livery who wore a cockaded hat, and attended upon by a footman, also in a cockaded hat. A splendid creature he was standing by the carriage door, representing force and dignity, and a dainty spectacle was Etta, stepping in and out in her Watteau dresses, followed by her clergyman carrying a shawl and a parasol—a spectacle that provided Cissy and Elsie with an almost endless subject for conversation, each exciting the other to fresh sallies and acrimonious remarks. Etta always likes to do things in fine style, said Cissy, and Elsie answered: It is strange that Etta, who is so quick to laugh at others, sees nothing ridiculous in her own conduct. You'll

hardly believe it, but she has again taken a room at Lunions! When did you hear that? Cissy asked. Only this morning. And now she has her letters addressed here; I saw one just now waiting for her. The room she requires, for she changes her gowns three times a day, exchanging her morning dress for one more suitable for the afternoon— With stockings to match, for sure, interjected Cissy. But why does she come here with her parson? asked Morton. I tried to persuade her out of this new wickedness; for though you fooled me and made me very miserable, I said, we are evenly matched; but this poor young man. . . . What did she say? asked Elsie. She said he had come over in the hope of a curacy in Paris, and that if he did not get it, he was prepared to go to India on the Mission. But, being a man of great talent, she would like him to remain in Europe. He is staying at Fontainebleau, she said, and what more natural than that I should drive over to Barbizon with him? And change her dress three times a day, remarked Cissy. I've often thought she was a little mad, said Morton, looking questioningly at Elsie, who answered: She is certainly not normal. But what makes you think so? She often comes to my studio with the drawings she did in the desert, Morton replied, and once we had a talk about the clergyman. It appears that Mr. Barrett is very High Church, and she would have him go over to Rome, if he does not get the appointment, on the grounds that Rome favours converts. There's nothing Etta likes so much as a Catholic church, said Cissy. But, Morton, have we told you that letters come for her to Lunions? Living at the Hotel de France and having letters addressed to Lunions seems very strange. It is certainly unusual, Morton answered, and the constant change of attire. And all for no purpose.

The painters separated, each to his or her special sub-

ject, and when they returned weary from the forest with their canvases the first thing they saw was the barouche with its horses, coachman, and footman, in front of the hotel. Waiting for Madame la Pompadour! said Cissy. Madame Recamier returning from driving with Chateaubriand, answered Elsie, and they fell into the perennial discussion whether Madame Recamier had lived and died in strict singleness. After hearing all the evidence and Morton's conjectures, Elsie said: We shall only just have time to make ourselves tidy for dinner; and the girls went upstairs wondering what richly coloured gown Etta would wear so that she might fool the parson to the top of her bent. The strangely assorted twain dined at a corner table, Etta's gown and the parson's coat and collar distracting everybody's attention from his and her neighbour. It was always thus when they dined at Lunions, and on this day dinner was half over when a servant brought in a letter and stood whispering at the door, Morton and Cissy and Elsie guessing that the letter contained evil news for Etta. So they said afterwards in the garden when they talked together, telling each other how Etta's face had brightened at the sight of the handwriting and how quickly a change had appeared in her, the first lines of the letter affecting her so much that the parson jumped to his feet to help her, thinking that she was about to faint. She would have fainted, said Elsie, if it hadn't been for the glass of water that he forced her to drink. And did you see her face afterwards, Morton, as she strove to gain control over herself? Yes, indeed I did, Cissy; and what powers of will she must have to have carried on as she did. She sent the parson to the piano with orders to do more than his usual splashing.

She must have suffered agony, said Elsie; but determined to deceive us, to prove to us that nothing had

happened worth speaking about, she got up to dance, and waltzed about the floor with herself. It was out of politeness I asked her to dance with me, but she refused, you remember. Morton's face drooped into meditation, and Elsie answered: If she had danced with you, the parson might have stopped playing. Cissy continued the conversation, telling how soon after Etta had called the Reverend Barrett over to her, saying that she felt tired and would like to return to Fontainebleau. She showed pluck, said Morton, for while the horses were being put to she stood talking to us and bade us good-night in quite a cheerful mood, or seemingly. Now what news can she have received? The news she received, answered Elsie, did not come from London. Harold is not dead, though the Comte may be.

The Comte! Yes, it may be that. Or it may be the Comtesse. She spoke of Marie as her great friend, saying that she did not wish anything to happen to Marie, but if——

Oh yes, I know, interjected Elsie, clearing the decks! clearing the decks!

XV

It was in the afternoon next day, as Morton was setting out for Melun to fetch his mistress and model, that a letter came from the hotel-keeper at Fontainebleau, saying that Miss Marr had left word that she was not to be called in the morning, and it was not till midday that a housemaid entered the room and gave the alarm. The doctor was sent for, and after an examination of the body, he reported that Miss Marr had died probably from heart failure. Morton handed the letter to Elsie and Cissy, who were returning from their painting. Good heavens! cried Elsie, and at Morton's bidding she and Cissy jumped into the carriage, whilst Morton fol-

lowed, saying: It was the letter that she got last night. And all the way to Fontainebleau they asked each other questions: What did she do it for? But did she do it? Was it an accident? Or was it an overdose? We shall never know, Morton said as they drove into the long, straggling street of Fontainebleau, for she has destroyed the letter, no doubt. But did she show the letter to Mr. Barrett? Elsie asked. Morton shrugged his shoulders, and the carriage stopped before the Hotel de France.

The hotel-keeper told them that he had sent round to Mr. Barrett's hotel, but Mr. Barrett had taken the eight o'clock to Paris. He mentioned that visitors did not like to sleep in a house in which there was a dead body, certainly not on the same floor. He had refrained, however, from calling in the police, who would have taken the body to the morgue, for he had known Miss Marr for some time, and she was a friend of the Comte de Malmédy. Morton told the man that he need not fear any loss for not having sent for the police and that a reasonable compensation would be paid by Mr. Harold Marr, who will be here to-morrow morning, he said. As I have his address I will write the telegram at once. May we go upstairs, said Cissy, to bid good-bye to our friend? We haven't brought any flowers, added Elsie, there was no time; but we'll send some. The hotel-keeper answered that a chambermaid would show them to the room.

Timorous, abashed, they crossed the threshold. Like a piece of marble, said Cissy. And how unlike herself, answered Elsie, and the girls began to wonder if death reveals or hides the truth, or if truth and falsehood end with life. It seems only natural that the untruthful in life should be untruthful in death, said Cissy. Elsie did not answer, the moment not seeming to her one for

criticism of their dead friend. All the same, it was dreadful to die like this, and laying aside their thoughts of the end that might await them, their eyes went round the room in search of the Watteau dress that she had danced in last night, and not finding it, Cissy said: She has hung up her dress in the wardrobe.

She has put away everything. Her parasol is in the corner and her hat is in its box.

She evidently thought it all out.

Not a drawer is open; yet she must have opened many, seeking the drug.

You think it was a drug? Cissy whispered, and returning from the bed, she said: It was a drug, for there's no blood. She put on a fresh nightgown; how like her!

Ah, here is the veronal, said Elsie, and the bottle half empty. If it was full last night, she has taken enough to kill twenty.

And here is the letter she received at Lunions last night, on the toilet table, in full view. Ought we to read it?

If she hadn't wanted us to read it, she would have destroyed it, answered Elsie, and they read the letter together, lifting their eyes from time to time to make sure that the dead girl was not watching them. If she shouldn't be dead, Cissy whispered, and should open her eyes and see us reading her letter! She will never open her eyes again, answered Elsie, and looking over Elsie's shoulder Cissy continued reading the letter that the Comte had written to Etta in answer to a letter of condolence she had written to him, full of pathetic sentiments about his dead wife, ending up by reminding him he had promised her that if ever he was free he would marry her. It was stupid of her, said Cissy, to write such a letter at such a moment. But he needn't have answered her so roughly.

His letter killed her. All her hopes were set on this grand marriage, all her vanity. The mystery is explained, Morton.

Morton closed the door. What mystery? he asked. She left the letter she got last night on the toilet table.

And you have read it?

If she hadn't wanted us to read it, she wouldn't have left it on the toilet table.

That's true, said Morton, and Elsie handed him the letter. Read it, she said.

No, I couldn't read it in front of her. It was the cause of her death, I presume?

Elsie told him the contents of the letter, referring to it from time to time, reading out the words with which the Comte bade Etta good-bye. You see, Elsie said, there was no hope of her ever getting him back after this letter. He couldn't return to her, and her mind was made up. She has put away her gown, her hat, stockings and shoes.

She was always deliberate in everything she said and did, so it's only natural that she should have been deliberate in death. But did she shoot herself, or was it poison?

Veronal, Cissy answered, for there's no wound. We looked.

But why did she leave the letter? asked Morton.

To revenge herself on the Comte, said Elsie. I can think of nothing else. There may have been some vindictiveness, but she lived in vanity, and she died in it seemingly.

Even so, said Morton, it would be just as well not to think of these things any more now that she's dead. And what can we know of her motives? hardly anything . . . very little about our own. But it's awful to stand here discussing her. Elsie and Cissy followed him

out of the death-chamber, and on their way downstairs they were talking of the parson, how he would take the news when he returned from Paris. He'll return this evening, Elsie said, and in two or three hours he will know all that we know. He'll throw himself at the foot of her bed and weep, Morton replied, and when Cissy asked him how he knew, he answered that he could only think of Barrett watching all night in the death-chamber, weeping and praying alternately. Maybe she sent him to Paris to get him out of the way. Harold will find him, Elsie interjected. Harold will reach the Gare du Nord before six, Morton continued; it will take him an hour to drive from the Gare du Nord to the Gare de Lyons, perhaps more than that, and there may not be a train, or a very slow one. I doubt if he will reach Fontainebleau before ten at the very earliest.

SARAH GWYNN

I

ON returning from the study door, whither he had accompanied the last patient, the doctor cast a glance of approbation at the two piles of gold and silver on his table, the gold slightly overtopping the silver; and considering them as a very adequate remuneration for his afternoon's work, Dr. O'Reardon dropped into his great Chippendale armchair (the very one that Sir Stanley used to sit in—it had returned to Ely Place after a brief sojourn in Taylor's shop in Liffey Street), and ensconced amid its carvings, his thoughts ran on a tiresome woman for whose everlasting megrim he had written a prescription: five grains of carbonate of soda, a neighbour, an acquaintance, a garrulous woman, who never would take a hint but would go on talking, however many people were in the waiting-room; she paid her guinea, but rarely failed to waste two guineas' worth of his time, putting him past his complacency. He regretted these accesses of temper by the burnished brass of the fire-irons and the multi-coloured marble chimney-piece, and continued to recall his patients. Another woman engaged his thoughts; her rheumatoid arthritis perplexed him; she didn't seem to improve under his treatment and he was afraid he would have to try inoculations. These cases, he said, go commonly from bad to worse. A moment after he was thinking of a child he had examined that morning for heart, still uncertain whether the murmur that had come to his ear through the stethoscope meant specific disease or whether it might be attributed

to poverty of blood. Another, a still more serious case, was remembered; and so that he might think better he closed his eyes, but began very soon to lose control over his thoughts, a veil seeming to rise and another to descend. He strove against sleep, but it was too late to rouse, and he must have slept for a long or a short time, which he could not say, but he must have slept deeply, for when the knocker of the front door awoke him he stared round the room, not recognising it as his own, returning to consciousness of himself through recollections of the parlourmaid who had run out of the house that morning without saying a word to anybody (she had her wages yesterday). From the parlourmaid his thoughts turned to the cook, who must be upstairs, else she would have gone to the front door. Now who could the visitor be? A patient, most likely, though it was past four o'clock. For a doctor of his position to let a patient in was a breach of etiquette, but circumstance—— Another knock startled him from his meditation, and he returned from the front door followed by a sparsely dressed woman, standing not much higher than his elbow.

All men and women resemble some animal, a friend had said one evening, and when he had pointed out many likenesses to cats and dogs, horses and hyenas, among his acquaintances, somebody said: And O'Reardon—what is he like? The answer came at once: A camel, and immediately everybody saw the resemblance: the small head, high nose, long lip, wide, drooping mouth. The story was an old one, almost out of currency, but the little starveling the doctor had just let into his house recalled it. If I am like a camel, he said to himself, what is this woman like? A squirrel? No; a squirrel is a gay boy. Before he could think again the little woman by his side began to tell that she had heard from Miss

Lynch that he required a cook, and he listened, already won by a voice so pure and clear that his curiosity was stirred to see his visitor; and the little, blonde face, the upturned nose, and clear, eager eyes that appeared when the lamp was lighted seemed to be the girl he might have guessed if he had laid his mind to guessing—a tiny, thread-paper girl in a straw hat, an alpaca jacket, and a thin skirt that did not hide her broken boots, a starveling, and remembering what Miss Lynch had told him, he said: The cook must be in the house somewhere; she'll get you a cup of tea.

No, thank you, sir. I same here thinking you wanted a cook. The doctor answered that it was the parlour-maid who had left. Then you'll not be wanting a cook, sir? she broke in, without a trace of disappointment in her voice; she even seemed to the doctor relieved to hear that she was not required. I remember now, the doctor said. You were in a convent in Wales, weren't you?

Yes, sir.

Miss Lynch told me about you; but when you knocked I was asleep and must have slept heavily, for I didn't know my own room when I awoke.

I am sorry I woke you, sir.

There's no need for you to be sorry. I'm glad you did, and that I went to the door. You were in a convent for nearly ten years, and because you answered the Sub-Prioress, or maybe the Prioress herself, sharply, they bundled you out, clapping a straw hat on your head and an alpaca jacket on your shoulders, giving you but your bare fare to Dublin, not caring——

Oh, but you mustn't talk like that, sir! It was all my fault. I spoke to our Sub-Prioress in a way that I shouldn't have. I lost my temper, and all the blame is with me. They did quite right to send me away, for they

couldn't have kept me. You must believe what I say; indeed, I am speaking the truth, and no more than it. The doctor did not answer, and at the end of the pause the nun said I doubt very much if I should suit you. I think I'll go.

You shall go, if you wish to go, in a minute or two, but I'd like to say a few words first. Miss Lynch mentioned that you would not hear a word said against the nuns, and advised me not to speak about the convent; but, as I have said, your knock awoke me, and I came to the door unable to collect my thoughts. That's how it happened, else I should not have spoken about the nuns. So, you see, there's no real reason for you to run away.

You want a cook, sir? The doctor answered that his cook had decided to stay, but the parlourmaid had left, and that if she would care to accept the situation he would be glad to engage her. I go out in the mornings, he continued, to my hospital or to visit my patients, and in the afternoons I receive patients from two till four. The wages are twenty-four pounds a year. I don't know your name.

My name is Sarah Gwynn, sir; and during the pause Dr. O'Reardon was again attracted by the tiny face, lit by blue-grey nervous eyes. I hope you'll not refuse the situation, he said, for if you do Miss Lynch will be very angry with me for my indiscretion.

I should not like you to have it on your mind, sir, that the nuns behaved otherwise than rightly, and would sooner lose the situation than——

Miss Lynch, who is a Roman Catholic, doesn't take that view, but we need not trouble ourselves about the rights and wrongs. You may have been overworked and tired; your nerves may have given way.

Yes, sir, that was it.

Sarah's vehement defence of her former friends and

sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ had evoked the doctor's sympathy, and smitten by her originality, he determined not to lose her. You will require some clothes, he said, assuming that she had agreed to stay, and he went to his writing-table and took five pounds from the pile of gold. At the sight of so much money Sarah drew back, as if afraid. I should like you to buy the things you want before the shops close, he continued. Miss Lynch will advise you, perhaps accompany you, as you have only just arrived in Dublin.

I know Dublin, sir. I was here before.

Ah, so much the better. Well, I shall expect to see you when I return home for luncheon to-morrow.

You may be sure I'll come, sir, she answered from the door; and then remembering that the lock was a double one, he said: Allow me. The two handles must be turned at the same time.

Sarah passed out, and Dr. O'Reardon had barely reseated himself in his chair before he began to regret the impulsive mood that had impelled him to take five pounds from the pile by his writing-pad and give them to a woman he might never see again. But she came recommended by Helena, a level-headed woman, and the doubt that had arisen was swept away, and its place was taken by a sudden and awful dread of breakages. For the woman who had left him had been ten years in a convent, where the concrete is nothing and the abstract everything, and to-morrow, if she returned (which she would, for Helena Lynch would not have sent her to him if she were not sure of her honesty), his cabinets filled with Bow and Chelsea would be in her charge; and the project of running after her with another five pounds, the price of a breach of agreement, started up in his mind. It was cowardice that kept him in his chair; and that night he slept but little, leaving the

house for his hospital filled with misgivings of what would happen between ten and eleven, the time she would arrive. He felt that when he returned for luncheon at one o'clock he would be told that she had filled a cut-glass decanter with hot water, with the usual consequences, or that a Chelsea figure had been swept from the chimney-piece into the fender. And the oriental vases and the birds! He shuddered. The carved mirrors above the chimney-pieces she could not touch, but she might easily knock a carved garland from a side table with a sweeping brush.

His carriage continued to take him further and further from his cherished possessions, and if a capital operation had not been awaiting him, he would have turned back to leave a note saying that she was not to attempt any work, cleaning above all, before seeing him. As the carriage crossed Carlisle Bridge, he thought of his pictures, his collection and his own water-colours. A might-have-been lives on in the heart, almost a reproach, and the memories of the art that he had abandoned and that could never now be his, put the ex-nun out of the doctor's mind (it was thus that he now thought of her) till he arrived at the hospital.

II

At one o'clock O'Reardon returned along the quays, forgetful of the old shop in Liffey Street, deep in thoughts of an accident, one that every doctor dreads; death under an operation. The patient had not recovered consciousness, and Dr. O'Reardon crossed Carlisle Bridge, passed Trinity College, reaching home without seeing or hearing, so absorbed that he did not recognise the smart young woman in cap and apron who met him in the passage. He asked her if luncheon was ready, and she answered that it would be in a few minutes; and

it was not till she began to tell him that several had called to see him that morning, that he roused a little and began to ask himself who the young woman was that remembered so clearly the messages given to her. On looking under the white cap he recognised the anxious face of the vagrant nun whom he had seen overnight, asking himself again what animal she resembled, if it was the white and red that had put a weasel into his head. But a weasel is white underneath and red above. Or was it her gait? She seemed to run forward and to stop suddenly, just like a weasel. Have you broken anything, Sarah?

Broken anything, sir? What makes you think that? Sarah resented the insinuation so sharply that the doctor had to plead that his thoughts were away, and he related the unfortunate operation, the failure of which he knew could not be laid to his charge, nor to that of the anaesthetist or the nurses. The man ought to have been operated upon earlier, he said.

And as with time his mind freed itself from qualms of conscience, he began to notice that life was passing pleasantly, a great deal of its smoothness seemingly owing to the diligence and care of his new parlourmaid. Since she came into his service plates ceased to be chipped; no Waterford glass had been broken, nor was his eye ever caught by a piece of ornamental carving knocked from a carven armchair. Nor did a cessation of breakages comprise all her qualities; she was now the parlourmaid that every doctor desires and never finds. Her service at table was excellent, though she had never attended at table before she came into his service. In six months she was more learned than the best of her predecessors. Everybody envied him. A dinner of twelve doctors could not be managed by two servants; another housemaid was called in, and Sarah's administra-

tion of the service was admirable. The plates were not put in the oven; they were heated by hot water; the entrées came out hot; the claret was neither hot nor cold but kept warm to just the right temperature. She reminded him that Mr. —— did not drink champagne; and when the doctor went into the country every Saturday to paint, and forgot to wash his brushes, when he remembered them they were washed. He had never had a parlourmaid to wash his brushes before. His palette was cleaned, too, and without disturbing the colours that he had set. Messages were delivered and appointments made that he could keep. Every month he discovered new qualities; economies were effected, and how she managed to supervise the household books without enraging the cook, he did not know, nor did he dare to enquire, but he noticed improvements everywhere, and also a change in Sarah herself.

She was a starveling when she came, shy and perplexed; now she had put on a little flesh and recovered her strength, and though her face could not be said to be as merry as a squirrel's, it was alive and pleasant. He noticed the neatness with which she wore her cap, her carefully brushed hair, and that when her attention wandered, which it did sometimes, a far-away look came into her pale grey eyes; and so he was moved to ask her if she was happy in her situation and had ceased to regret the convent, to think well of the nuns, but remembering the rebuff he had received on the first occasion, he refrained from putting any questions to her. From these absences she would return suddenly, and he often wondered if she was aware of her absent-mindedness; he thought she was not, and that she came and went unwittingly. Her face lighted up when he spoke to her; she would continue the dropped conversation and go out of the room, a little more abruptly, he

thought, than at other times. Sarah is much improved in health, he said to himself, and fell to thinking what her secret might be, without doubting that all Sarah had told him of herself was true; but there was much in her life beyond the facts that she had been in a Welsh convent for ten years and had been turned out at a moment's notice for rudeness to her superiors. Her accent told him that she came from the County Down, and for a Down girl to find her way to a Welsh convent was queer enough to set the least curious wondering how she had wriggled out of her Protestantism to begin with, and subsequently into a convent in Wales.

It had come to his ears that Sarah missed Mass, which was strange, unless indeed she had changed in mind as much or more than she had physically, and he remembered her words in defence of the outrageous nuns, and her abrupt rising from her chair with the intention of refusing the situation he had offered her. That time may have revealed to her how cruelly she had been treated was quite possible. She had never spoken of it again. It was true that the opportunity had not occurred. But the other reports! His friends had seen Sarah late at night in Sackville Street and Grafton Street and round Trinity College; nor was she passing quickly through these streets on her way home, but loitering, peering into the faces of the passers-by like one in search of somebody. That his friends had met Sarah, or somebody they had mistaken for Sarah, was certain; but the thought that the reaction from the convent had driven her to lead a double life—his parlourmaid during the day, a whore on her evenings out—was a belief that none who knew her could entertain, for to know Sarah was to believe every word she said. Her exalted moods, her clear, pure voice—— No, it is not possible, he said; moreover, Helena would not have sent her here if she

were not sure of her character, knowing how important it is to me. . . . His thoughts passed into a reverie of the days when Helena had decided to work for her own living, and the excellent Health Inspector that had come out of this determination. But how had she come upon Sarah? All he knew was that they had met the day after Sarah arrived in Dublin in the straw hat and the alpaca jacket. It might be that Helena knew only Sarah's story; but it is not easy for one Catholic to deceive another with a tale of expulsion from a convent, and sharp-witted Helena, though a Catholic, was no fool, and he would learn Sarah's secret from Helena when she returned to Dublin.

The words came into his mind: She 'll hardly recognise Sarah, so much improved is she, almost a good-looking girl; and hearing her laughing—her laughter came through the window with many sweet-scented airs from the garden—Sarah laughing with Michael! he said, and seeing her standing by the tall, lilac bushes, gathering purple bloom for his dinner-table, Michael, the gardener, drawing down the high branches with his rake, he began a letter to Helena, telling her of the coming of spring in his garden, the lilac in bloom, the buds swelling in the apple trees, waiting for the May-time. All the world, he said, yields to the gentle season, and it may be that it will find its way into Sarah's heart; her feet are certainly on the lilac path, and I should not be surprised overmuch (though I should be surprised), if you were to find her married to Michael when you return, a merry look in her eyes replacing the yearning look for something beyond the world, which you have not forgotten, so characteristic is it of her. . . . In the letter he was writing he would tell, too, of the secret which he was sure that Sarah was hiding from him—hiding, perhaps, from Helena. His thoughts were brought to an end by the

arrival of a patient, and it was not till many days after that he discovered the half-written letter among some papers on his writing-table.

III

I cannot thank you enough, he wrote, for sending me Sarah, a most excellent, far-seeing servant, holding all the threads, managing everything, interested apparently in me and in me only; but behind this impersonal externality she lives her personal life, of which we know nothing. She has been with me now nearly a year, yet my knowledge of her is not greater to-day than it was before I saw her. I have learned, it is true, that she came originally from the north of Ireland; she didn't tell me, her accent told me, and I have been wondering if her bringing-up was Protestant and if she became a Catholic from caprice. Newman, I believe, went over for theological reasons, but theology cannot have been the motive that seduced Sarah, whose attendance at Mass is casual, uncertain, so I am told. Be this a lie or truth, she is no longer religious; indeed I doubt if she ever was religious. Then why did she, a Protestant presumably, become a Catholic and enter a convent? And why is she so silent about herself? The door opened behind him, and without turning round the doctor answered Sarah, who asked if he was busy: I am writing a letter to Miss Lynch; and he continued writing till his attention was attracted by the silence behind him. You heard me say that I was writing to Miss Lynch? Now, Sarah, if you have any message—— No, sir, I have no message. I have come to ask you for her address. You see, it was she who sent me to you, and may be able to get me another place, for I've come to tell you that I shall be leaving you at the end of the month. But if you would let me go sooner——

Leaving me, Sarah, at the end of the month! What do you mean? I understood that you were satisfied with your situation——

Yes, sir; the situation is all right and I am grateful, but it can't be helped.

Can't be helped! the doctor repeated. Everything can be helped. Tell me why you're leaving—why you're thinking of leaving. Is it wages? Tell me; there must be a reason, and when I know the reason I shall be able to arrange.

There are things that cannot be arranged, sir, and this is one of them. As she spoke the words she moved towards the door, but the doctor rushed past her, saying: No, Sarah, no; you cannot leave the room until I hear why you want to leave me. It is not fair, nor is it right, for you to walk out of my house without giving a reason, like the parlourmaid you superseded. Are you going to be married, for if you are that will be a sufficient reason?

No, sir; I am not going to get married.

He watched her face, and she returned to the writing-table with him. Now, sit down, Sarah, and tell me why you're leaving.

Well, sir, it is because the gardener wants to marry me.

But he hasn't interfered with you in any way?

No, sir; I've got no fault to find with him.

No fault to find except that he asked you to marry him?

But I can't marry him, sir. It would be better if you didn't ask me any more questions, indeed it would.

Am I to understand that you like the gardener?

He is all right, sir; I shouldn't mind if things were different.

Tell me, Sarah.

You wouldn't understand, sir; it would seem a lot of nonsense to you.

But everybody is nonsense to the next one. I would like to hear first of all why you left the north and why you became a Catholic.

I was always a Catholic, sir; my mother was a Catholic.

And your father?

Father was a Protestant, and mother went over when she married him. You see, in the County Down a Protestant can't marry a Catholic, for everybody would be against her. Mother wanted to bring me over with her, but I wouldn't go over, and that was the beginning of it.

Sarah stopped suddenly, and a little perplexed doctor and maidservant stared at each other. I can't see, sir, how all this can interest you; but if you wish to hear it, I'll tell you the story, for I have been very happy here and am grateful to you, and, as you said, I can't leave without giving a reason. When mother went over I was twelve, and out in the fields at five o'clock in the morning pulling swedes and mangel-wurzels; the wurzels are the worst, for they have roots a foot long, and it was terribly hard work getting them up, for I wasn't as strong as the other girls. They all thought it hard work; our backs ached dreadfully when we went home to breakfast at eight o'clock.

And after breakfast?

After breakfast I had to go to school; and when school was over we began to feel the dread of next morning creeping over us, at least I did.

And to escape from the pulling of mangel-wurzels you came to Dublin?

No, it wasn't that, sir. After a bit my stepfather was out of his luck; ten sheep died on him, the mare cast her

foal; and we did not keep the bad luck to ourselves, for we shared it with the farmers round our way, and the talk began that somebody had put a curse on the County. If anything goes wrong in County Down it's the fault of the Catholics. I was the only Catholic there, and as I passed by some boys on a gate, one of them said: There goes the papist, and another picked it up and cried: To hell with the Pope and his witches. I took fright in case the story should get about and my feet be put in the fire till I confessed that I had sold my soul to the Devil. So I saved up a few pence every week till I had enough to bring me to Dublin, and one day after my morning's work on the farm, instead of coming in for dinner I walked into Belfast. It was a brave long walk, more than seven miles, so I had to buy some meat, and this left me with only a shilling above my railway fare. I was afraid to break into my shilling in Dublin, but by ten o'clock it was that cold I had to have a cup of tea. I hung round the coffee-stall, thinking I might hear where I could look for work in the morning, and then the stall-keeper closed for the night. A drizzle was coming on, and the policeman I spoke to told me I had better go to the workhouse. But I didn't know the road, and if they didn't take me in (and why should they? for I didn't belong to Dublin), I'd have to come all the way back again. Why back again? the doctor asked, and she said that she expected more luck about the parks. Than where? queried the doctor. Than in the streets round a workhouse, she answered. The late hour and the word luck put the thought of prostitution and begging into the doctor's mind, and it was with a sort of relief that he heard her say that on that night luck would have meant to her a bench where she could sit till daybreak. I was looking for one, she said, when a girl spoke to me. I think I heard you ask the policeman

where you could get a lodging, said she; those were her very words; but I told her I had no money to pay for one, only a few pence. She asked me if I was from Dublin and I answered I was not, that I was from the County Down and had taken the train from Belfast that night. We walked on together. I said: You are out late, and she told me that she was out to meet somebody. But it's getting late, she said, and the rain is coming on again; if you stay out all night you'll be soaked. I told her I couldn't help that, for I had only a few pence and was afraid to go to a doss-house where the beds are threepence a night. She didn't answer me and I could see she was turning something over in her head. It was then that I began to take notice of her; I noticed her umbrella, for I had never had one myself, and wondered why she had spoken to me and let me walk by her side. She had a veil, too. Quite the lady, said I to myself, and no ill-looking girl either. She told me her name was Phyllis Hoey and that she worked in the daytime in a biscuit factory, and if I came with her in the morning I could get work there, not work that would be well paid for, but enough to pay for my lodging. As for food and clothes, well, that was another thing, she said. She told me to come in under her umbrella out of the rain, and I came up close, afraid at first to take her arm. We'll be fellow-workers in the morning, she said, and you can sleep with me to-night. I didn't know where she was taking me to. It was a long way, and it was all I could do to hold out till the end, and I can't tell you, sir, what a relief it was to get out of the darkness, to see her light a candle, and to catch sight of the bed. We slept soundly enough, and in the morning she took me to the factory. The manager wanted an extra girl, as it happened, and I would get eight shillings a week. As I only got three-and-six a week for pulling mangel-wurzels, eight shill-

ings seemed like a fortune. Why, said I to Phyllis as we went to the workroom, if you let me live with you we'll have sixteen shillings a week. We won't have all that, said Phyllis, for there are always fines; they generally manage to get a shilling a week out of us. Well, fifteen shillings, said I, and it was disheartening to hear her say that we'd have to pay more for the room now there were the two in it.

The day passed from eight o'clock in the morning until twelve, packing the biscuits in tin boxes, with every layer separated by paper, and they told us we mustn't let it get crumpled; if the Inspector found the least wrinkle in the paper, we had to unpack the box again, and as we were paid by piece-work I soon saw that like this we wouldn't get even six shillings a week maybe. At twelve there was an hour for dinner; as I'd had no breakfast I didn't know how I'd get through to the end of the day, and I wouldn't have if Phyllis hadn't taken me to a grub-shop, where she said most of the girls went for their food, the ones that wasn't living at home, and Phyllis paid for me, for I'd have no money till the end of the week. But, said I, our dinners alone will cost us all we earn. Phyllis laughed and said that there were always extras; I thought she meant overtime, and we went back to the factory. It closed at seven. And on our way home I asked if we couldn't buy our food and cook it ourselves, and save half of what we spent in the grub-shop. But Phyllis was afraid that we'd not get back to the factory in time, and any saving we'd make would be lost in a fine. And so talking we got back to our room, where Phyllis began to dress herself out just as I'd seen her the night before, hat, umbrella and gloves, and as she didn't offer to take me with her, I stayed at home, waiting up till midnight. You mustn't wait up for me, she said, for if you do you'll be too tired

to go to work. And what about you? said I, and waited for an answer, which I didn't get. She just went on undressing herself, taking out of her pocket more money than I knew she had gone out with.

It was that night as we lay down together that she said to me: Well, Sarah, you may just as well hear it now as later. A girl can't get a living out of the factory; it just keeps us employed in the daytime, and then the girls go out into Sackville Street, and there, or round about the Bank or in Grafton Street, the money's good—you can pick up half a sovereign or maybe a sovereign. But you don't find them along the pavement, said I. Our gentlemen friends give as much, ninny, she said, and I quickly understood that the factory girls, all the young ones at least, made their living, or the best part of it, on the streets, and that I'd have to do the same, for I couldn't thole going on sponging on Phyllis, who only fell away from the right course because there was no other way for a girl to get her living in Dublin, none that she knew of. I heard Phyllis fall asleep, but I couldn't sleep that night for thinking, it not seeming to me that I could go on the streets nor that I could stay at home while she did, for that would be like taunting her, living a lady's life at home and she walking out round and round, up one street and down another. That's how I saw her in my head all the night, afraid to come back without half a sovereign, and to take money earned her way seemed no better than earning it that way myself. Phyllis didn't try to persuade me; she said that every girl must do the best she can for herself. She had often heard of girls marrying in the end off the streets, but she didn't want to say a word that might lead me where I didn't want to go. She said she quite understood, but that there wouldn't be enough money for both of us if I didn't go, and in the end I might have been

pushed into it, for I'm no better than Phyllis; and there never was a kinder soul, and maybe it's kindness that counts in the end.

And how was it that you escaped the streets, Sarah?

No more than an accident, sir. We were at work all day in the factory, as I've told you, and while Phyllis was out from seven o'clock till half-past eleven or twelve, I used to sit sewing, trying to make a little money that way, and as it was summer time the nuns were out every evening in their garden. I forgot to tell you that our window overlooked a convent garden, a lovely garden, with big trees and green plots, and it was lovelier when the nuns came out and walked in twos and threes through the shadows. I had only known religion as a quarrelsome thing that set men throwing stones and beating each other with sticks, breaking windows and cursing each other, and I said: If I had time, I'd like to know more of the nuns, they seem so quiet and happy. But we were, as I've said, at work all day, and it wasn't till there was a strike in the factory that the days were our own, with no bell ringing and nobody to take our names as we went in. We could go and come as we liked, only there was the money; but as most of the girls got their living as I told you, sir, we could hold out. It was whilst the strike lasted that I went to the nuns' chapel to attend Mass, a thing we seldom had—on Sundays we had to sleep it out. The strike lasted a fortnight, and I heard a little more of the Catholic religion than was spoken about in the County Down. Phyllis said: If you have a feeling that way, tell the priest who hears your confession that you'd like instruction in the Catholic religion; he'll give it to you and jumping. So I did, and entered the Church just about when the strike was to end.

But, Sarah, I thought you were always a Catholic.

My mother was a Catholic and I was baptized one, as

I've told you, but mother went over when I was a child; between twelve and thirteen I was at the time, so you see I had had no instruction, or very little, in my religion. I'd been a month in Dublin by this time and owed Phyllis more money than I would ever be able to pay her back, and I was thinking of going into service, which I ought to have done long before, but I knew nobody that would recommend me. Father Roland (that was the priest who instructed me) said he would recommend me, but he was a long time about it and things were going from bad to worse. It seemed that I would have to do in the end as Phyllis did, and it might have been like that if Father Roland hadn't said one day: Some nuns in Wales are looking out for lay sisters, but they are very poor and cannot afford to send you the price of your passage over; and you'll want money to buy the clothes you'll wear during your probationship. But where am I to get the money? I asked, and he spoke of putting by a little week by week; and I was going to tell him how I was living, but the story didn't seem one for a gentleman like him to hear. And it all seemed more hopeless than ever. Phyllis said nothing, but I knew she was thinking that I'd better come out with her of an evening. She was down on her luck; for nearly a week she had not met with any money, and we were as poor as we could be, but still I clung on to hope. I seemed very selfish to myself, but you see, I was only eighteen and knew nobody except Phyllis and the girls at the factory. If I had known then what I know now, I could have gone to an agent and got some charring, maybe a situation. But I'm making a long story out of it, and the telling of it will make no difference. I must leave you, sir.

I'll be able to tell you, Sarah, if you'll have to leave me when I have heard your story.

Well, sir, one night Phyllis came home in great spirits.

She had met a gentleman who had been very kind to her and given her two pounds. We talked about him a long while, and Phyllis was to meet him next day. And when she came back about half-past eleven, that was her time, she said: I told him about you, and he says that he'll pay the money for the convent if you'll come to meet him. It wasn't for sin that he needed me; the man was really a very religious man and knew that he was doing wrong in lying with Phyllis, but he couldn't help himself; and that was why he told her he would give the money to get me into the convent. I was to pray for him in return.

And did you go to meet him, Sarah?

No, sir; for the next time Phyllis saw him he said that Phyllis's word was good enough for him, and that he'd give her the money, taking in return for it my promise to pray for him. Tell him, I said to Phyllis, that I will never cease to pray for him, and for you, too, dear Phyllis, though indeed it should be you to pray for me, so much does it seem that I'm the wicked one. And we spoke of the wages of sin. But Phyllis said: Dear, you wouldn't do it well; you're not suited to the life. It's well that you didn't.

She seems to be a very good girl, your Phyllis, the doctor said.

Yes, Phyllis is a good girl. There never was a better one, so good that it seemed to me, as I was saying, sir, that I was the wicked girl and Phyllis the good one. But that couldn't be, for the Church says different. Then I seemed to understand that every day I stayed in Dublin I was putting Phyllis into sins that she wouldn't commit if I wasn't with her. The night she went out to meet the gentleman again I prayed for them both all the time, and the money seemed hateful money she brought back. But there it was; it was earned, it was gotten, it

would have to be spent, and it was better it should be spent on a good purpose than on a bad, so it seemed to me; and the next day we bought the clothes. Father Roland wrote to the nuns. A telegram came, and we went down to the boat together, crying all the way, for we were very sorry to part. Sir, I don't think I can go on telling you. It broke my heart to part with that girl; she'd been so good to me and we were such friends, and there was nothing for it now but we be to part for ever. I felt I was never going to see her again, and I think she felt the same about me.

Have you never tried to find her, Sarah?

Oh, sir, all my evenings out have been spent hunting for her round Merrion Square and round about College Green, up Sackville Street as far as the Rotunda, looking for her in the crowd. Now and again it seemed to me that I saw somebody like her, and I ran and looked into her face, but it was not Phyllis. I can't go on telling you the story, sir. I can't, indeed I can't. She laid her face in her hands and fell across the doctor's writing-table, her sobs alarming him, the big tears rolling from her eyelids down her swollen cheeks, even to her chin. If anybody were to call! The doctor waited, saying nothing, relying on silence to calm the girl's grief. At last he said: Let me hear the rest of the story. You went on board the boat and arrived at the convent—when?

In the late afternoon, sir, towards evening. I don't think I can tell you any more of it.

Yes, you can, Sarah. I cannot tell you whether you are to stay or go till I've heard the end.

Well, I don't know that there's much more to tell, sir. You can guess the rest, that I was very miserable at leaving Phyllis, and felt more and more as time went on that in God's sight there could not be much to choose

between us, and at last I went with my story to the Mother Prioress.

To the Mother Prioress! the doctor repeated.

You see, I wanted to leave the convent and go back to Phyllis and tell her that I'd lead her life. In great grief one hasn't one's right thoughts. And when I came to the Prioress to tell her that I wasn't happy and what I had left behind, she said: My child, you can't go to a life of sin. Well, what can I do? I asked her, and she told me that there was one remedy for it all, and that was prayer. You see, she said, you are without money, without friends; you can't save Phyllis from the life she is leading, but you can pray for her. All things are in the hands of God; he alone can help. So I took the Prioress's advice and prayed. . . . After a time I was a postulant and then a novice, and when I had taken the final vows I seemed stronger. But there was always in my heart the pain that I had left Phyllis to a life of sin and gone away myself to a life of comfort and ease, with the hope of heaven at the end. I couldn't get it out of my head, and I wouldn't have been able to bear it if it hadn't been for the Mother Prioress, who was very good to me and understood that the lay sisters had as much right to hear Mass as the choir sisters. But her time came, as it will come to all of us, and the Prioress that came after her was quite different from the one that had gone.

It was she who turned you out of the convent, wasn't it? Sarah answered: Yes, sir, and continued her story drearily, telling that several lay sisters in the convent had died, and that many of those who remained were old women who had come to the end of their time, infirm, bed-ridden women: We had to attend on them in their cells and wheel them up and down the Broad Walk when there was a little sun. These old sisters were a great burden on the funds of the convent; I think the choir

sisters felt it. And then two lay sisters died, young women who were not strong enough for the work. That was about three years ago, sir. So the convent was short of workers, and the choir sisters had to shift for themselves, and not being used to work they soon tired. So the Mother Prioress wrote to all the priests she knew for postulants, but the ones that answered her letters wanted to be choir sisters; none of them had fortunes, and the convent couldn't afford to take them without. So all the work fell upon us, and many days we didn't even get Mass. There was no time for private prayer; it was drudge, drudge, all the day, and if half an hour or ten minutes did come, I was too tired to pray, and there seemed to be no hope for me to make up my arrears. My health, too, began to fail, and I was distracted by thoughts that I was failing in my duty towards Phyllis. The Prioress had told me I could only help Phyllis by my prayers, and in the last years there was no time. And what with bad health and thinking that I was remiss in my duty towards her and the man who had given me the money, one of the big dishes dropped out of my hand one day in the kitchen. The noise and the clatter of the pieces brought in the Sub-Prioress, who told me I wasn't worth my keep. I didn't answer her, but she brought the Prioress to see the kitchen, and everything was found fault with: it wasn't swept, and the crockery was chipped and broken—all through my carelessness. I don't know what they didn't find fault with that day, and they thried on me till at the last the blood went to my head and I spoke without knowing what I was saying, telling them that while they were walking idly in the garden we were working our lives away. Yes, I think I said that two nuns had died already of hard work and bad food, and that we had no time for prayer; that the nunnery was no house of prayer but just a sweaters' den,

and that I'd sooner go back to a biscuit factory, where at all events I had the evenings to myself for prayer. I said many wrong things, but however wrong I was the Prioress shouldn't have turned me out of the convent after ten years of work. I stood up for her when I came here first, sir, when you spoke against her; but perhaps I am wrong now and was right then. And now you have had the whole story.

Not all the story, Sarah.

Well, I know no more of it, sir.

You have not told me why you're leaving my service.

My duty is towards Phyllis, sir; I have promised her my prayers, and there's the man that paid for me, too, to be considered. If I married I would be having children and I'd have to look after them, and Phyllis would be forgotten; I couldn't be remembering her always except in a convent.

You've never told me, Sarah, how you met Miss Lynch. You must have met her the day you arrived in Dublin.

No, sir; it was the next day. I arrived in Dublin late in the evening, and after walking about Sackville Street, Bond Street, and round Trinity College, searching for Phyllis——

But you were ten years in the Welsh convent, and in ten years——

She may have married; she always looked to marry, I know that, but being in Dublin I had to look, for one never knows. I was just back where I was before, with this difference, that I had a sovereign. The nuns at the last moment said they'd let me have that much——

For ten years' work! chimed in Dr. O'Reardon, but without noticing the interruption Sarah continued: It was all over again what it was before, myself asking the policeman to direct me, and when he heard I had money

he said there was a woman in the street he lived in who would take me in. He directed me. There was in her house a child put out to nurse——

And Miss Lynch being a Health Inspector! said the doctor. I see it all!

But I wouldn't want you to think ill of the Welsh nuns, sir. You see, it was hard for them to keep me and I after saying to the Prioress that she was answerable for the lives of the lay sisters, and much of that sort. They couldn't have kept me, and I have reason to think they have suffered in their consciences ever since, for when I wrote to them to tell them where I was and that I'd like to enter another convent if they'd give me a brief, they wrote, leaving out many of the bad things I'd said, for they were in the wrong too themselves, and they felt it, I'm sure of it. I am leaving you, sir, with sorrow in my heart, for I cannot find Phyllis, though I have looked everywhere for her.

Phyllis may be dead.

Even so, sir, I must pray for her; we must pray for the dead. I know you Protestants don't, but we Catholics do. And I hope you'll forgive me, sir, if I've deceived you in anything, an' indeed I have that, for I only came into your service to earn enough money——

To go into another convent, the doctor interrupted.

Yes; that was at the back of my mind always.

Well, if that be your conviction, Sarah, you must go.

Now will it be putting you to an inconvenience if I don't stay my month?

It will, Sarah, but I haven't the heart to detain you. Peace of mind comes before everything else; and I dare say that I shall be able to get another parlourmaid within the next three days. And we part then, Sarah, for eternity.

Not for eternity, sir. We shall all meet in heaven, Catholics and Protestants alike.

And what about the broken-hearted man on the ladder clipping the ivy on the wall of my house?

Throwing out the sparrows' nests, sir. He said you told him to.

What is to be done, Sarah? Sweet-peas and sparrows are incompatible.

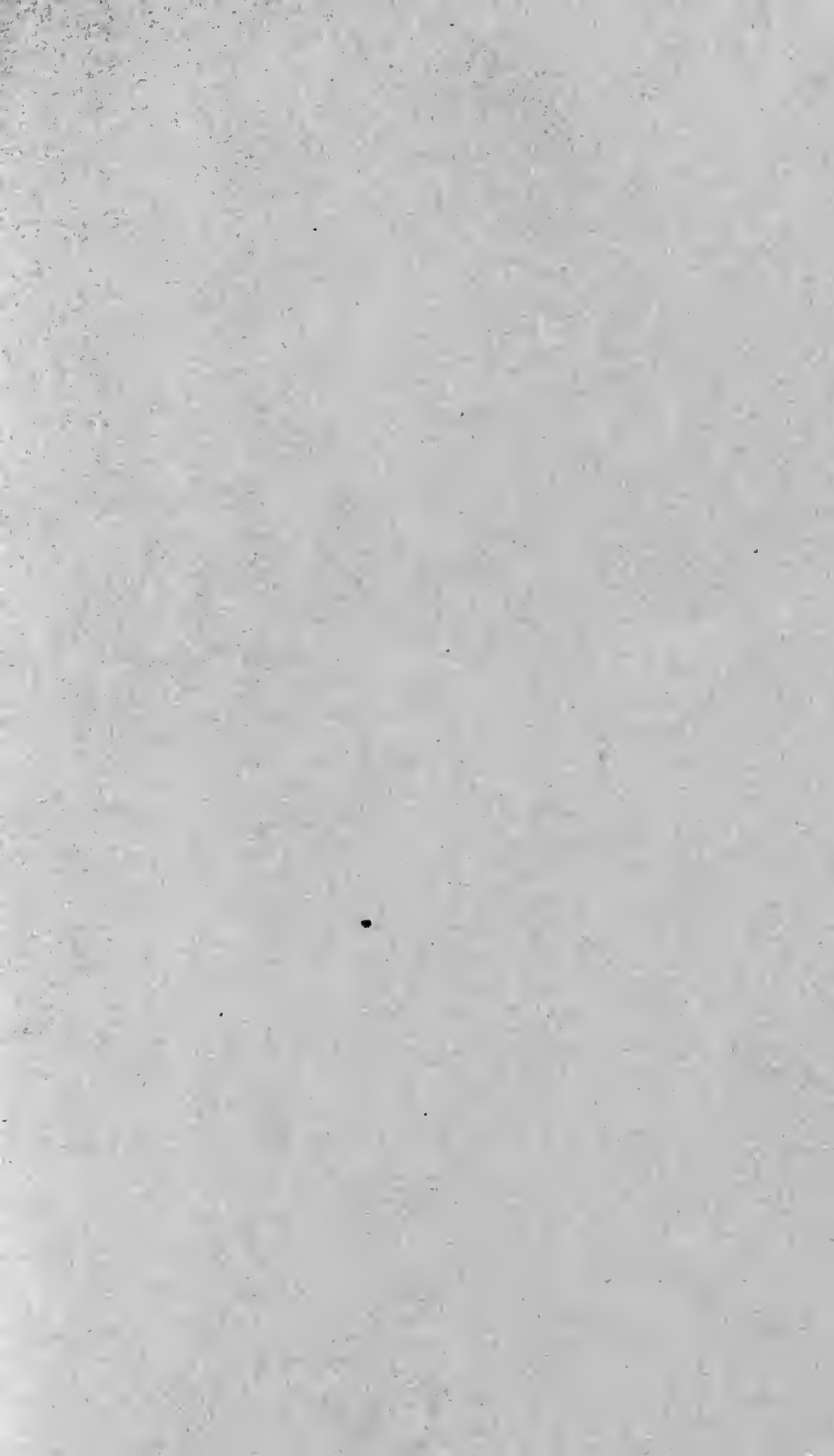
He's sorry to do it, sir. He showed me a nest with four little ones, and the moment I touched their beaks they opened them, thinking their father and mother were bringing them food.

You think more of the sparrows than of Michael, Sarah.

I'd think of him ready enough if it wasn't for my prayers.

The door closed. The doctor was alone again, and he continued his letter to Helena Lynch, bearing Michael's shears among the ivy.

THE END



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